

STUDIO SHOEGAZE RETURNS HOT CHIP MATTHEW HERBERT M.I.A.

XLR8R

123
DECEMBER
2008

ACCELERATING MUSIC & CULTURE
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Best
OF 2008

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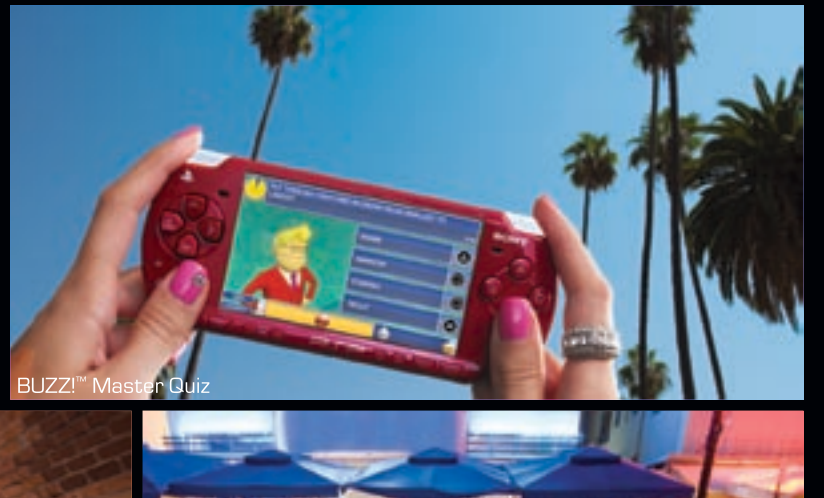
WWE SmackDown vs. Raw 2009



Shaun White Snowboarding



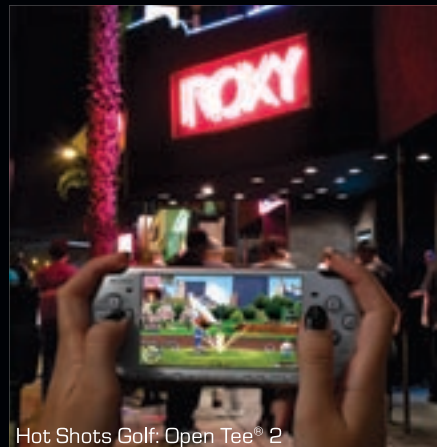
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STUDIO, PHOTOGRAPHED IN GOTHENBURG, SWEDEN BY KARL ISAKSON

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Ed's Rant: Best Of Times



A pre-pompadour Drop The Lime dropping dirty bass at Brooklyn's Mad Suspect party, 2007.

By the time we get to our annual Best Of issue it's always like, "What even happened this year?" But we know this much—in 2008, with all its wild twists and fits and instability, music did a lot to keep us sane. Whether it addressed the dark side of humanity (like TV on the Radio or Salem), or whether it escaped to the dancefloor (thank Fake Blood and Flying Lotus), music was the balm keeping us from losing our minds if (unfortunately?) not inciting us to riot.

On the note of dark sides and dancefloors, a New Yorker named Drop The Lime pushed the limits of both in 2008, using a variety of tricks (from dubstep's wobble bass to *cumbia* congas) and tools (Logic, Live, MAX/MSP) to prove that bass music can be more complicated, engaging, and clever than just bare loops and compression. Like other artists we loved in 2008—Gang Gang Dance, Daedelus, No Age—Drop The Lime blurred genre lines and erased limitations. He trafficked in digital and analog, music and multimedia, pop and underground, sacred and profane, things left sequenced and things let wild. And, more than that, his tracks made us feel alive. Though journalistic ethics caution against letting friends interview one another, it was unanimously decided that I should leverage my closeness to DTL (and the mystical properties of the agave plant) to procure the best stories about his unusual childhood and how he does his thing. Check XLR8R.com for all the stuff we couldn't fit into the mag.

As for the best (and worst) of 2008, this is the seventh year in a row we've

polled folks about their favorite moments in music, art, and culture. This year we added a twist: We picked our favorite artists and asked them to name their highs and lows of the Oh-Eight, from the best albums and tech gadgets to the worst style trends and political moments. Beach House, The Mole, Matt Furie, The Death Set, and more said it better than we could have, but the buck did not stop there. We also hit up our favorite MP3 blogs to get their ones to watch, and moseyed on down to Aquarius Records, where Andee Connors gave us the scoop on the growing cassette-label trend.

The resurgent popularity of tape was but one of many ways culture pined for the past this year. Layers of shoegaze's beautiful distortion were all over the place, from bands both new (Elika, Asobi Seksu) and vintage (Spiritualized, My Bloody Valentine). Prague-based writer Patrick Sisson tracked down the movement's figureheads and found out how they feel about all this—you can almost smell the crackling amps as members of Ride, Lush, and Chapterhouse tell us how it was.

Don't worry—we're not growing ponytails and turning into *Mojo*. Although we revere the past, we remain hopelessly devoted to the now, with its new sounds, new sights, new discoveries, new loves—hell, sometimes even the old becomes new again. So have fun digging through this issue, and we'll see you again—like new—in the new year.

—Vivian Host, Editor

Staff

EDITOR

Vivian Host (vivian.host@xlr8r.com)

MANAGING EDITOR

Ken Taylor (ken.taylor@xlr8r.com)

ART DIRECTOR

Tim Saputo (tim.saputo@xlr8r.com)

DESIGN AND PRODUCTION

Mark Bartling (mark.bartling@xlr8r.com)

ONLINE MANAGING EDITOR

Jennifer Marston (jennifer.marston@xlr8r.com)

PRODUCER, XLR8R TV

Kerry McLaughlin (kerry.mclaughlin@xlr8r.com)

SENIOR WRITER

Toph One (redwine@xlr8r.com)

VIDEOGAMES EDITOR

Ryan Rayhill (ryan.rayhill@xlr8r.com)

EDITORIAL INTERNS

Shane Cashman, Justin Maxson, Lulu McAllister

STAFF WRITERS

Eric K. Arnold, Derek Beres, Nick Chacona, Martin DeLeon, Matt Earp, Rob Geary, Derek Grey, David Hemingway, Max Herman, Ross Hogg, Ethan Holben, Ross Holland, Justin Hopper, Josiah Hughes, Brandon Ivers, Jason Leder, Luciana Lopez, Monty Luke, Cameron Macdonald, Fred Miketa, Peter Nicholson, Tomas Palermo, Dave Segal, Jesse Serwer, Evan Shamoan, Patrick Sisson, Janet Tzou, Tony Ware, Rico Washington

CONTRIBUTING WRITERS

Tyra Bangs, Michael Byrne, Joe Colly, Allura Dannon, Ali Gitlow, Andy Hermann, Connie Hwang, John S.W. Macdonald, Sam Mickens, Doug Morton, Eric Smillie, Velanche Stewart, Roger Thomasson, Walter Wasacz

STAFF PHOTOGRAPHERS

Andy Eisberg, Morgan Howland, Paul O'Valle, Dustin Ross, Ragnar Schmuck, Mathew Scott, Christopher Woodcock

CONTRIBUTING PHOTOGRAPHERS

Mark Bartling, Alexandra Bone, Melissa Freivogel, Ellen Hagg, Vivian Host, Karl Isakson, Justin William Lin, Ali Mahdavi, Giulia Mazza, Ryan Pfluger, Tobias Rose, Adam Schneider, Alex Solmssen, Francesca Tamse

STAFF ILLUSTRATORS

Chuck Anderson for No Pattern, Derek Morris for Trophy, Colin Strandberg for The Work Steady

CONTRIBUTING ILLUSTRATORS AND STYLISTS

Colin Standberg, Liz Baca, Alessia Sicari

ON THE COVER

Drop The Lime shot in Central Park, NYC, by Adam Schneider. Styling by Mad Marietta.

FEATURED TYPEFACE

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Contributors



Francesca Tamse

When Francesca Tamse isn't taking photos, she can be found where she would normally be taking photos—but dancing *while* taking photos. In 2004 she decided she wanted to snap her favorite musicians and artists, and as an adolescent began sneaking cameras into shows to take photos of rockstars while having big crushes on them. Tamse currently lives in San Francisco, where she's finishing a BFA in photography. She shot El Perro Del Mar for this issue.



Karl Isakson

Karl Isakson is based in Gothenburg, Sweden, where he does most of the photography for Information Records. He is currently completing an internship with Swedish artist Andreas Nilsson and finishing the final stages of his formal photography education. For this issue, Isakson shot Studio and Little Dragon in Sweden. He'd also like to report that a barber recently torched his ears with flaming cotton.

karlisakson.com



Sally Mundy

Sally Mundy has been a San Francisco resident for several years, but remains a true Midwesterner at heart—as evidenced most distinctly by her well-mannered disposition, loyalty, and love for Salisbury steak. She is a drummer, DJ, and bingo champion (top that!), and currently keeps *XLR8R's* banking game tight as our Accounting Manager extraordinaire.



Giulia Mazza

Raised in a small town outside of Mantova, Italy, Giulia Mazza spent her teenage years capturing the Italian hardcore scene through the lens. She became a bit more serious when she earned a scholarship to the Italian Photography Institute in Milan. She's now the head of photography for fashion retailer Yoox.com, and continues to shoot on a freelance basis as well as play organs in the orchestral-shoegaze-pop band A Classic Education. She photographed our Pantherina style shoot.

giuliamazza.com

Staff

PUBLISHER/EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Andrew Smith (andrew.smith@xlr8r.com)

ADVERTISING MANAGER

Ethan Holben (ethan.holben@xlr8r.com)

ADVERTISING SALES REPRESENTATIVES

Tanya Lutman (tanya.lutman@xlr8r.com; 212-226-4339)

Carol Gillard (carol.gillard@xlr8r.com; 212-239-4554)

EVENTS AND ONLINE MARKETING MANAGER

Shawn Reynaldo (shawn.reynaldo@xlr8r.com)

ADVERTISING AND MARKETING INTERNS

Brigid Moore, Stephanie Neptune

ACCOUNTING MANAGER

Sally Mundy (sally.mundy@xlr8r.com)

CIRCULATION MANAGER

Jennifer Marston (jennifer.marston@xlr8r.com)

SUBSCRIPTIONS

Shawn Reynaldo (shawn.reynaldo@xlr8r.com)

OPERATIONS CONSULTANT

Michael Prommer

CO-PUBLISHER

Arias Hung

ADVERTISING: Dial

415.861.7583, fax 415.861.7584, email advertising@xlr8r.com,

or mail *XLR8R* Magazine, 3180 18th St. #303, San Francisco, CA 94110

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CONTACT US: San Francisco HQ: 3180 18th St. #303, San Francisco, CA 94110;

New York Office: 114 Bowery, Suite #206, 10013, New York, NY 10001;

letterbox@xlr8r.com, fax 415.861.7584

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CORRECTION:

In issue #121, we incorrectly stated that the PDX Pop Now! Festival hosted out-of-town bands; the festival showcases only Portland-area music.



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GLITCH MOB TV



BOUNCIN' OFF THE WALLS AT THE RED BULL MUSIC ACADEMY, AND TAKING IT ON THE ROAD WITH GLITCH MOB.

In October, editor Vivian Host headed to Barcelona to attend the 10th installment of the [Red Bull Music Academy](#). Not only did she pick up some new DJ tips 'n' tricks, but she also got an exclusive interview with Basic Channel member [Moritz "Maurizio" von Oswald](#). Back in San Francisco, publisher Andrew Smith took L.A.'s [Glitch Mob](#) for a little ride around town to blast their frenetic beats, soundsystem-style, from the back of a rented van.

Check out all the madness at [XLR8R.com/tv](#), and come back every Tuesday for new episodes, including recent shows with Christopher Willits, Yelle, and Santogold.

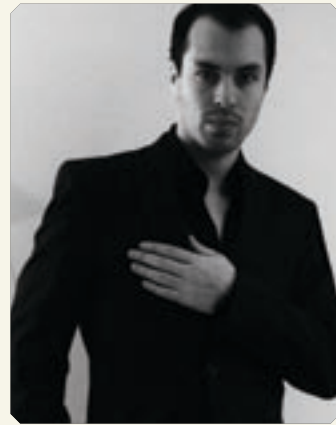
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PODCAST

TECHNO MAYHEM FROM SERGE SANTIAGO AND KONTRÖL

For December, we've lined up a couple stellar podcasts for your downloading pleasure. First up: a set from U.K.-based [Serge Santiago](#), featuring techno, house, and electro from the likes of Droid, Boo Williams, and Boytronic. Following Santiago, we present a mix from our homeboys at the Kontrol club, who've been holding down the serious techno and house end of things in S.F., and who host Berlin's Cassy this month.



Get your lethal dose of [XLR8R](#)'s favorite tunes, and sign up for our weekly podcast at [XLR8R.com](#), where we feature exclusive mixes from all across the spectrum.



OCTOBER NO. 121

Interview excerpts with Panther

A history of Portland punk with Mark Sten

Portland artists' favorite local haunts

[XLR8R](#) TV episodes with Honey Owens, White Rainbow, and Matt McCormick

PDX style as seen through the eyes of its artists

[XLR8R.COM/121EXTRAS](#)



LOOK FOR THE XLR8R.COM EXTRAS ICON

This issue is filled with online extras, including extended interviews, photo outtakes, audio clips, and videos. See them at [XLR8R.COM/123EXTRAS](#)



NOVEMBER NO. 122

Interview excerpts with Passions, Hannah Stouffer, and indie studio engineers

Tech talk from Michna

[XLR8R](#) TV episode with The Bug and Warrior Queen

The Martinez Brothers' favorite house tracks and need-to-have DJ gear

[XLR8R.COM/122EXTRAS](#)

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XLR8R's "Holiday Gift Grab" Contest

Just in time! Snag a Hercules mixer, *Prince of Persia*, and a J.Fold wallet.

With the economy the way it is, the likelihood that your folks are going to load you down with gifts this season is seeming slimmer by the day, right? Well, here's your opportunity to show *them!* This month, take home three amazing prizes from a trilogy of brands we love. First up is Ubisoft's brand-new *Prince of Persia* game (available on PS3, Xbox 360, PC, and DS), which not only won nine awards at the E3 conference this year, but has proven to be a hit even in our own "Loading..." column. You'll also pick up a hot wallet from **J.Fold**'s new Reverb Collection, which is said

to be inspired by industrial design, vintage sports cars, and limited-edition sneakers. And to top it all off, you'll grab Hercules' new **DJ Console RMX**, a multi-function mixer and MIDI controller that received top marks in September's Machines section.

To win the whole lot, **tell us about the lamest holiday gift you ever received in less than 200 words**. Winners will be chosen based on the best (or lamest) answers.



One grand-prize winner will receive a Hercules DJ Console RMX, a copy of *Prince of Persia*, and a J.Fold wallet.

Four runners-up will receive a copy of *Prince of Persia* and a J.Fold wallet.

Entries will be accepted via standard mail and email, and must be received by January 6, 2009. Send your entry to: [XLR8R](#)'s Holiday Gift Grab Contest, 3180 18th St. #303, San Francisco, CA 94110 or email [contest@xlr8r.com](#) with "XLR8R's Holiday Gift Grab Contest" in the subject line.

[ubisoft.com](#), [jfold.com](#), [hercules.com](#)



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BJ "Bitter" Bastard's Worst Sayings of 2008

The new year will no doubt usher in a host of phrases more horrible than one can imagine, but 2008 sure was a doozie. Here Bitter Bastard runs down his top 10 slang stinkers of the year.

"Totes"

Or any derivative thereof (toteez, totallee, tots). Your persistent need to abbreviate not only confuses Isotoner slipper enthusiasts—it also makes you sound like a Cabbage Patch Kid.

"Obvies"

See "totes." Then stop using Instant Messenger words speak like a grown-ass man.

"Build"

As in hip-hop dudes telling us "I wanna build with XLR8R." Take your Lego-ass lingo elsewhere, please.

"I can haz cheeseburger"

O HAI, no you can't have a cheeseburger. Stop it.

"Get up"

As in "let's get up sometime next week." Um, have you spent too much time playing that Marc Ecko graffiti game? Unless you illegally write on walls, it's time to dead this one.

"The"

The article "the" is fine—it's when you put it in front of things that don't need it, like "the gays" or "the Google," that it becomes a problem.

"Teh"

People who can't spell "the" fucking suck. They suck even more when they misspell it intentionally. And yeah, I know this was more of a problem in '07 than it is now... Blow me, word nerd!

"Shizznapz"

Or "done-zo" or anything that you've so cleverly added a "z" to—lamez!

"Sick"

I'm so over it. Get up with me when you graduate to 2008, *brah*.

"Maverick"

There are only two real Mavericks: poker schemer Bret Maverick (as played by Mel Gibson in the 1994 film of the same name) and Tom Cruise in *Top Gun*. I know mssrs Gibson and Cruise—and John "My Head Don't Move" McCain, you, my friend, are no maverick.

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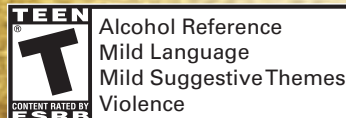


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PLAYSTATION 3



UBISOFT



A Lisbon collective turns the world on to hard-ass Angolan house.

Buraka Som Sistema

Kuduro is Portuguese slang for “hard ass,” which is what you stand to obtain if you dance long enough to the pumping Angolan house strain of the same name. Judging by the videos on YouTube—including one for Portuguese crew Buraka Som Sistema’s “Sound of Kuduro”—you’ve got a long way to go before that tight ass is yours; the clips showcase *kuduro*’s fast ‘n’ furious rubber-legged breakdancing, including such show-stopping moves as a guy hitting himself in the face with his foot and a kid slapping himself before keeling over in a dead man’s fall.

“*Kuduro* all started as a dance movement,” explains Buraka’s soft-spoken MC Kalaf Angelo. “To understand *kuduro* you need to understand the whole story about Africa. To get an emotion out of somebody in Africa is really hard, so dancers need to do some crazy stuff like break an arm or a leg to receive applause. For them to go to the limit is normal—the whole society is pushed to the limit.”

Buraka Som Sistema—a DJ/production team helmed by Rui “DJ Riot” Pité, João “Lil’ John” Barbosa, and Andro “Conductor” Carvalho—doesn’t make *kuduro* per se, but it would be impossible to write about them without mentioning the genre. They’ve been championing the music—which is popular in the African expat communities of their native Lisbon—since 2005, when they began making edits of *kuduro* tracks to play in their DJ sets. It’s not a weird fit. Like *baile* funk and *kwaiito*, *kuduro* is bass-driven electronic dance music; underneath the incessant, harsh patter of the MCs and the unique pattern of the drums, it’s like tribal house on steroids.

“When *kuduro* first started it was very clowny and stupid,” explains straight-talking João. “There was a big wave of *kuduro* in the end of the ‘90s and then it had the fastest fade out ever. But to be honest, while no one was listening to it there was a huge development in the instrumental side of it; DJs like Znobias were really pushing the genre. When we started listening to the new stuff that guys like him were developing we thought, ‘We definitely need to do something with this.’”

What BSS ended up creating were electro-house jams that maintain *kuduro*’s raw feel and dancefloor urgency while adding better production, DJ-friendly structure, and more developed melodies. While they caught the ears of DJs like Diplo and Sinden, they were also developing a live show that features plenty of drumming and a cadre of rappers and dancers.

“When we play live, we don’t want the songs to be there for nothing; every song has to make sense,” explains Kalaf. “The Prodigy shows were impressive for me—we like that energy and we want to produce that energy. We kind of represent this new face of Africa,” he continues. “Even if our songs don’t take you there lyrically, the whole attitude takes you there.”

• Buraka Som Sistema’s *Black Diamond* is out now. It will be released in the U.S. next year. myspace.com/burakasomsistema



Check out our XLR8R TV interview with BSS at XLR8R.com/123extras.

From left: DJ Riot, Kalaf Angelo, Conductor, and Lil’ Jon

Hits From The Blog

Six of our favorite web portals pick their best artists of 2008.

Cocaine Blunts on Killer Mike

"It's almost cliché to call Mike the new Ice Cube at this point, but their shared penchant for simultaneously dropping knowledge and busting heads is undeniable. The former Outkast protégé has been quietly having the best year of his career with the *I Pledge Allegiance to the Grind* 2 LP and his weekly *Sunday Morning Massacre* internet series." cocaineblunts.com



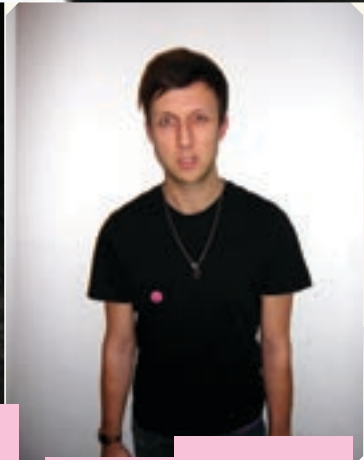
MNML SSG on Move D

"It seems strange to choose an artist who has been producing committed, sincere electronic music for longer than most of us have been listeners—D was already DJing in '87. Move D has been with us all the way, but 2008 is his best year on record. His exceptionally diverse collaborative works, his intuitive understanding of depth, mood, and melodic restraint, and the staggeringly high quality of his thoughtful compositions make him the outstanding artist of the year." mmlsbg.blogspot.com



20 Jazz Funk Greats on Salem

"Salem makes the sound discovered in a spinning black prism, nestled in the shadowy basement of a lifeless church looming above the grey treetops in a quarantined forest—ethereal and nightmarish, like The Cocteau Twins spinning dubstep 12"s at the Arctic Circle. They have left us spellbound this year with the 'Yes I Smoke Crack' 7" on Acephale, and will continue with more dark offerings soon on Merok." 20jazzfunkgreats.blogspot.co.uk



Palms Out Sounds on Zombie Disco Squad

"This London duo has managed to stay three steps ahead this past year. With their brand of bouncy, malleable house music. They delivered phenomenal remixes for Fagget Fairys, Gameboy/Gamegirl, and The Touch, released their debut 12" (the untouchable *baile* house track 'Vie'), and homo-eroticized Lil' Wayne on the 'Straight Boy' edit." palmsout.blogspot.com



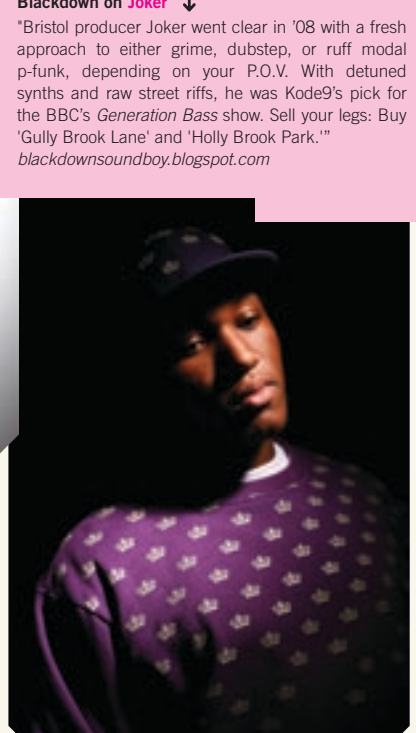
Blackdown on Joker

"Bristol producer Joker went clear in '08 with a fresh approach to either grime, dubstep, or ruff modal p-funk, depending on your P.O.V. With detuned synths and raw street riffs, he was Kode9's pick for the BBC's *Generation Bass* show. Sell your legs: Buy 'Gully Brook Lane' and 'Holly Brook Park.'" blackdownsoundboy.blogspot.com



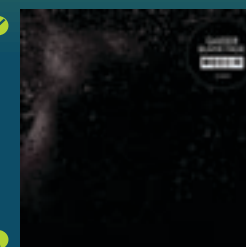
Austin Surreal on Bavu Blakes

"The legend of Central Texas was on his worldwide grind this year, releasing a flow a week on 0Bissogreat.com and flooding the streets with his *Extra Plair* EP. His live backing band features Brannen Temple on the drums, blind multi-instrumentalist D. Madness on keys, bass, and sometimes drums, Gary Clark Jr. on guitar, and a cadre of lovely backup singers. His dynamic live show earned him a slot on the annual ACL Festival, where he performed for 3,000 people." austinsurreal.blogspot.com



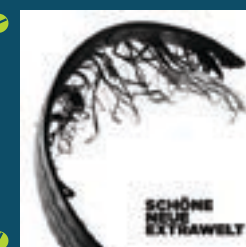
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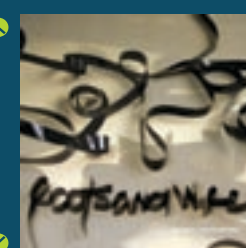
ARTIST Gaiser
RELEASE 'Blank Fade'
LABEL Minus

"In a genre where artists often struggle for identity, Jon Gaiser is one of those rare producers whose sound is instantly recognisable. The solo projects, collaborations and remixes he's created over the course of his output on Minus, all contain a very specific signature to the point where his tracks come alive, communicating in a language that speaks with the strangest, most intoxicating of tongues. His highly anticipated debut album, *Blank Fade*, is no exception, and it sees him pushing the envelope even further resulting in the most comprehensive and impressive body of work he has accomplished so far."



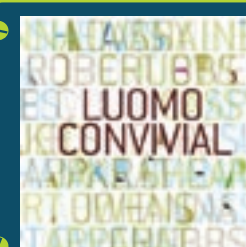
ARTIST Extrawelt
RELEASE 'Schöne Neue Extrawelt'
LABEL Cocoon

"It's all about hooking up our music to the emotional world of electronic music at the beginning of the Nineties, however, without falling for nostalgic references. We don't want to do cowardly Zeitgeist Techno, we want to have the heart to dare big sounds and more melodies. Sunrise scenarios, energy, revolution and kaput-ness, all these are parts of the Extrawelt."



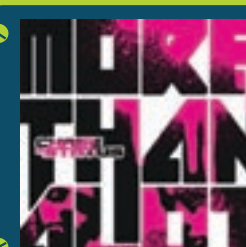
ARTIST Deadbeat
RELEASE 'Roots & Wire'
LABEL Wagon Repair

"Deadbeat is Scott Monteith, a long-time Montrealer and recent Berlin ex-pat who has been releasing his own special blend of dub-laden, minimal electronics since 2000 for labels such as Cynosure, Musique Risque, -scape, and Spectral, to name but a few. This is his first full-length release for Wagon Repair. The album is aesthetically informed by his long term collaborative friendship with Robert Henke (Monolake), the creative relationship with Wagon Repair, the close proximity of his fellow artists in Berlin and the opportunity to collaborate with Paul St. Hilaire."



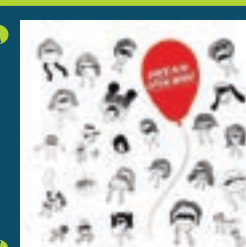
ARTIST Luomo
RELEASE 'Convivial'
LABEL Huume

"Sasu Ripatti is the producer and head writer behind the project Luomo, his musical outfit that has redrawn the very boundaries of what 'house music' can achieve. Always a shy man, Ripatti returns into view to introduce to the world 'Convivial', his latest, and fourth, album as Luomo. For his relief though, this time he doesn't have to arrive alone. In addition to a long-time collaborator Johanna Iivanainen, this time he lands with a semi-underground star cast: Cassy (Panorama Bar), Sascha Ring (Apparat), Jake Shears (Scissor Sisters), Robert Owens, Sue-C and one anonymous singer who hides behind a name Chubbs."



ARTIST Chase & Status
RELEASE 'More Than Alot'
LABEL RAM Records

"Drum 'n' bass producers Chase & Status - Saul Milton and Will Kennard - have long been respected on the urban dance scene. Their work, such as drum 'n' bass anthems 'Duppy Man' and 'The Druid's EP', received great acclaim from the likes of Pendulum and Andy C. With the forthcoming release of their long awaited debut album 'More Than Alot', there is a strong expectation that Chase & Status are set to be the biggest cross over act ever to come from the drum 'n' bass scene."



ARTIST Dave Aju
RELEASE 'Open Wide'
LABEL Circus Company

"After three amazing EP's on Circus Company, including the recent underground hit 'Be Like The Sun', Dave Aju presents 'Open Wide', his debut full-length LP release. He has really outdone himself this time with his most conceptual and personal, yet accessible work to date. The album was made entirely with sounds from his mouth, but it's no novelty affair, these are all wonderful pieces of music, covering a variety of styles."

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CONVERSE 

Clothes Captioned

Durkl

Wild patterns and nonsense words with Washington, DC's Sharp brothers.



If you ask Durkl co-owner Will Sharp about the brains behind the Washington, DC brand, he'll tell you it's run by "two incredibly handsome 20-somethings" with brown hair and brown eyes. Not one to be modest, Sharp is referring to himself and his brother; "We're like Beavis and Butthead," he says, "but really, really sexy versions." Sexy talk aside, the Sharp boys are best known for bright, snarky, and just plain weird t-shirts, retina-popping all-over prints, and colored denim so bright it'll give you a sugar rush. It's a little bit '80s, a little bit DIY, and a lot straight-up strange, not unlike the duo's style icons, which include Theo Huxtable, Ian Svenonius, HR from Bad Brains, and Pee-Wee Herman. When we rang, the Durkl dudes were sitting on thrones in their office (a converted Model T garage on Capitol Hill), drinking Buds and listening to Tim Sweeney's *Beats in Space* radio show. We interrupted them long enough for Will to give us a breakdown of their current collection, which is inspired by "birthday cake and mind control." *Tyra Bangs*

durkl.com



Crayola sweater (\$74)

I have an extensive sweater collection... not sure why, but I do. I've been looking to design one for a while now, and this is the first crack.



Machine t-shirt (\$30)

I designed this tee back in 2006, but it didn't make any sense for us at the time. I pulled it back out when designing this holiday line and added an amazing Spinal Tap reference to the design. Can you find it?



Snakeskin Barracuda jacket (\$130)

This jacket's liner is our Stay Tuned pattern, custom quilted with contrast purple thread. In other words, it is really cool.



14th St. flannel (\$72)

Someone told us a few weeks ago that we invented the "nerdy chic" look. Not sure what that means, but say hello to the new look: urban hunting.



Stay Tuned beanie (\$32)

Color coordination is very important to us. This beanie shows how well colors can work with each other without being overdone.

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Tapes 'n Tapes

Andee Connors of Aquarius Records picks the year's most striking cassette labels.

A handful of uniquely packaged limited-edition tapes, courtesy of Aquarius Records.



For those of us still living in the Walkman age, cassettes never went out of style. The malleable, susceptible-to-everything magnetic tape may have taken a back seat to CDs and MP3s in recent years, but it lives on, particularly in the darker metal end of the spectrum. With tape imprints and their digital sister—the burgeoning scene of home-burnt CD-R record labels—gaining traction amongst indie collectors this past year, we tapped **Andee Connors** of San Francisco's Aquarius Records to give us the shop's top five cassette labels, and then some. *Ken Taylor*

Custodian, Color Zoo Containers

A San Francisco label with *the* most elaborate and over-the-top and flat-out gorgeous cassette packaging we have ever seen—from individual mini-collages to painstakingly cut out transparencies. Full of strange, abstract noise and dark, droning weirdness. Some of our favorite CCZC artists include The Moppers, Core of the Coalman, and Take Up Serpents.

Tour De Garde

A killer Canadian label run by the dudes in black metal band Akitsa. Nicely packaged, amazingly twisted black-metal buzz, and gorgeously grim black ambience. Look for Uno Actu, Menace Ruine, Tomb Of, and Ash Pool.

Digitalis

Not exclusively a cassette label, but they have put out some mind-blowing tapes. They're all extremely limited and lovingly packaged, containing all sorts of abstract drone-folk, atmospheric free noise, and beyond. Some of our faves on Digitalis are Svarte Greiner, Natural Snow Buildings, and Xela.

Twonicorn

A now-defunct label specializing in creeped-out drones, druggy, sludgy heaviness, and dark, dreamy shimmer. Another label with impeccable packaging and super-striking design. The Twonicorn all-stars include Bonecloud, Glass Organ, Changeling, Earthen Sea, and Tombi.


Insikt

Another black metal label, not exclusively tape-oriented, but with a serious cassette bent. Run by Kim from suicidal doom black metallers Hypothermia, Insikt tends toward the grim and depressive, with some of the more memorable miserablists being Durthang, Ovsikum, Nihilium, and, of course, Hypothermia.

Other bad-ass tape labels we dig:

Abandon Ship, Folding Tapes, Northern Sky, Antihumanism, Arbor, Tipped Bowler Tapes, Slow Tapes, and Black Horizons.

aquariusrecords.org

 Go to XLR8R.com/123extras to see our XLR8R TV episodes with Carl Craig and Bradford Cox, shot at Aquarius Records.

Things are Looking Up

Echo Park's **Hope Gallery** makes art everything... but boring,



Clockwise from left: Front of Hope Gallery, David Scott Stone's photographs at the MOM show, Lucky Dragons street performance.

Los Angeles' **Hope Gallery** has been many things since it opened in March of this year: a pop-up vegan raw-food restaurant, a venue where local bands Skinned Alive to Death and Soiled Mattress & The Springs have played, and a hang-out for friends, family, and strangers. In short, it's been anything but a traditional art gallery.

"Honestly, the inner workings of the gallery world are kind of lost on us. For better or worse we kind of make it up as we go along," says Australian expat **David Kramer**, who runs the space, which is "about the size of three or four taco stands," with **Cali DeWitt** (of neighboring bookstore Family and the Teardrops record label).

Of course, with help from friends like No Age and Wendy Yao (of Ooga Booga), the stuff Hope's just

thrown together is quite exciting, from an inaugural show featuring the collaborative work of Sumi Ink Club (the side project of art band Lucky Dragons) to the crazers drawings of Lightning Bolt's Brian Chippendale and Sam McPheeters (of seminal hardcore band Born Against). "The folks I know respond to art that conveys honesty and daring. With that in place, the medium is secondary," says DeWitt of the space's curatorial choices. "The gallery is a living beast that runs itself," he continues. "However, it needs a little practice honing its skill."

"We're inspired by the idea that you only need your friends and energy to generate something with great impact," concurs Kramer, who notes that their main priority in selling art is just to keep the gallery open, so they can plan more fun stuff, including shows from

Will Sweeney and Aaron Rose.

While cool kids from out of town frequently stop by Hope hoping to immerse themselves in the Echo Park scene, Kramer and DeWitt say there are a few things you can't absorb unless you live in L.A. "There's so much hugging your clothes smell!" says Kramer. "And if you don't live here you can't be involved in bumping into like-minded folks who you love and admire on every street corner," says DeWitt, whose current obsessions include Grace Jones and wearing goggles at home. "It is in the little things that a lot of the magical moments happen." *Tyra Bangs*

Hope Gallery is located at 1547 Echo Park Avenue in Los Angeles. myspace.com/hopegallery



Elements Brand New

Streetwear gets *haute* this season with looks inspired by high fashion.

Compiled by
Liz Baca of The Goods!



1. Princess of the Posse Numero Uno sweatshirt (\$50) princessoftheposse.com

2. Gram 383g shoes (\$180) gramdesign.se

3. Brian Lichtenberg for Blood Is The New Black Balenciaga and RIP YSL t-shirts (\$33) bloodisthenewblack.com

4. VNGRD Foto Snow Dog jacket (\$230) vngrd.org

5. Rocksmith Tokyo Getto Boys crewneck (\$60) rocksmithtokyo.com

6. BBP Pelon t-shirt (\$34) bbpbx.com

7. Project Darkhorse v-neck (\$40) darkhorseworld.com

8. Cubannie Links Mantanzas diamante bracelets (\$32) cubannielinks.com

9. Booji Regal One-Lava shoes (\$120) boojihouse.com

10. Cookie-Cutter Hucci and G&V crewneck (\$69) cookie-cut.com

School of Seven Bells

A Brooklyn-based Secret Machines offshoot puts the "dream" back in dream pop.



From left: Benjamin Curtis, Alejandra Deheza, and Claudia Deheza

It's just past 9 p.m. at Diner, a dimly lit foodie joint in Williamsburg, Brooklyn. Slouchy hipsters in plaid button-downs and black schoolteacher glasses talk earnestly over flickering candlelight, while grungy waitresses scribble the daily specials on paper tablecloths. Benjamin Curtis and his fellow School of Seven Bells bandmates, Alejandra "Ali" Deheza and her twin sister Claudia, sit quietly in the corner. Like other fledgling artists, the Bells can't believe their own appeal. "Our music is so personal, I can't believe anyone actually likes it," states Curtis, a former member of space rockers Secret Machines.

School of Seven Bells' debut album, *Alpinisms*, is a warm hybrid of '90s ethereal rock, melodic electronics, and noisy shoegaze guitar; it's one of the most disarming and lush dream-pop albums this year, but it's influenced by more than just what's

pleasing to the ear. "Our inspiration comes from what we imagine visually," explains Ali Deheza, whose wide brown eyes could inspire their own anime cult following. "Like when you're dreaming of something wet, you're not really feeling it—you're just conjuring it up in your head. Our music is like that: It's the feelings and visions we have moving around in our heads."

Their music may be full of abstract concepts, but what makes *Alpinisms* so inviting is the Bells' keen pop sensibility. One of the album's most personal songs, "For Kalaja Mari," is a love letter to a friend Ali lost to suicide—and one of the album's most accessible tracks. The percussive, freespirted "Face to Face on High Places," probably *Alpinisms*' catchiest piece, also offers one of its simplest themes: how Claudia's love for her two-year-old son has sharply

focused her life. "I would say that our sound is a simple one—we just take a lot of time shaping the atmosphere," reflects Curtis. "It's all pop music, we just make it mostly electronically."

The haunted vocals and eerie atmospherics of *Alpinisms* aren't just musical—the Bells are literally living in their dreams. Since they were children, the Deheza sisters have practiced lucid dreaming in response to chronic vivid nightmares, and Curtis lives with a waking dream disorder, which causes him to see things while he's asleep—although he appears to be awake. "It's terrifying because he's both awake and asleep. I'll have to shake him a lot for him to realize that nothing is happening," explains Ali, who is dating Curtis. "I'll see him talking to me but I'm not there. Or he'll be convinced there's a bug on my head."

• School of Seven Bells' *Alpinisms* is out now on Ghostly International. schoolofsevenbells.com

Sweet Exercists

Berlin techno heads **Exercise One** contextualize the era that spawned New Order's melancholy debut, *Movement*.



From left: Ingo Gansara and Marco Freivogel holding New Order's *Movement*. Photo: Melissa Freivogel

The distinct atmosphere that pervades New Order's *Movement* is what makes it an especially great album for Exercise One. Being born eight years apart, we have different histories with this album. Marco can still remember first hearing it in '87, when an old friend in his hometown played it for him, and he was amazed by its unexpectedly dark sound. Ingo got into this chapter of influential music much later, after coming to Berlin 10 years ago and getting hooked on tracing musical milestones. It was fate that we met at that time, as Marco was digging through his old favorites and uncovering his own musical history for Ingo. It's easy to guess how we came up with the name for our musical project—the song "Exercise One" appears on Joy Division's *Still*.

When *New Order's Movement* hit the streets in 1981, Ian Curtis (the lead singer of Joy Division,

the band from which New Order sprouted) had only passed away a year before. It was also less than a year before Bernard Sumner, Peter Hook, and Stephen Morris would release the chart-topping and influential "Blue Monday" 12". There's some extraordinary context hovering around this special record, and it's hard to think of something more influential than the band at that time, when they went from post-punk heroes to synthy dance-pop icons.

Colorfully illustrating this remarkable transformation are the two singles that came out before and after *Movement*. On one hand, you've got the first New Order single, "Ceremony," penned by Curtis and actually one of the most wonderful Joy Division songs caught on tape—which, interestingly, kick-started the stellar development of New Order. The other is "Temptation," the first demonstration of New Order's new love affair with dance music.

Does this make *Movement* a collection of in-between scraps? Not at all! *Movement* is a wonderfully melancholic album that documents the group's exceptional development. It's obvious that *Movement* is the band's testimony to coping with Curtis' unexpected death. You can hear the ghost of Curtis weaving in some special touches on the record here and there. On tracks like "Truth" and "Doubts Even Here," it is almost creepy how close singer Bernard Sumner comes to sounding like Curtis.

Take the track "ICB" (which stands for "Ian Curtis Buried") for example, and the lyrics to "The Him," which speak for themselves: "Some days you waste your life away/These times I find no words to say." Still, *Movement* is not just a Joy Division rip-off—it is a perfect mix between the two incarnations of this unique band.

Exercise One's "All Out" is out now on Lan-Muzic. New Order's *Movement Collector's Edition* is out on Rhino. myspace.com/exerciseone1, neworderonline.com

Words Rico "Superbizzee" Washington
Photo Alex Solmsen

Phenomenal Handclap Band

A pair of NYC soul-funkateers piece together a disco-not-disco revival.



From left: Sean Marquand, Laura Marin, and Daniel Collás

On a hot summer night in July, a few hundred tastemakers and members of the press willfully jammed themselves into the sweaty, overcrowded, diminutive 105 Rivington lounge in NYC's Lower East Side to revel in a new experience more akin to a church revival than a rock show. This experience was provided by The Phenomenal Handclap Band, an impressive hodge-podge of various accomplished musicians simultaneously channeling the energy of !!!, Tom Tom Club, Can, Cerrone, and Giorgio Moroder in a surreal explosion of sound.

The energy conduits in this pulpit are Daniel Collás and Sean Marquand. Both DJs on the New York City funk and soul scene, the pair also helped reinvigorate the careers of Salsoul pioneer Joe Bataan and '70s Brazilian funk band União Black by producing their comeback albums (2005's *Call My*

Name and 2006's *União Black*, respectively). Yet the duo felt compelled to forge uncharted musical paths. "Both of us are really into soul records," remarks Marquand. "But with this [project], we tried to open up with a range of different styles of music."



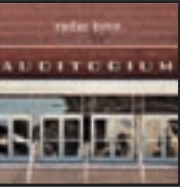
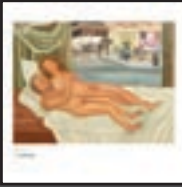





Collás offers a more practical reason for their latest collaboration. "The initial idea was to get our feet wet as producers a little more," he concedes. "Then I thought to myself, I have all these friends who are in bands that are doing well now. Why don't we use that resource and get those people involved with it?"

On paper, juxtaposing the talents of alt-rockers such as TV On the Radio's Jaleel Bunton, Jon Spencer, and Mooney Suzuki's Reno Bo with the funk and R&B chops of bassist Nick Movshon (who works with Mark Ronson and Amy Winehouse) and guitarist Luke O'Malley (Antibalas, Mary J. Blige)

sounds like a recipe for genre suicide. Throw in Carol C of Si*Sé, Tiombé Lockhart, and L'Trimm's Lady Tigrá—who lays down a rhyme scheme reminiscent of Indeep's 1982 hit "Last Night a DJ Saved My Life" on the delicious funk romp "15 to 20"—and the result is a savory mélange of dance-rock, soul, and fuzz funk peppered with Italo-disco's spacey synths and elements of psychedelic and Eastern European prog rock. The whole affair tests the limits of even the most eclectic music snob.

A year and a half after starting the project, Collás and Marquand are more than prepared to put their Frankenstein on parade. "We'd like to make it as big and epic as possible," states Marquand. "We're definitely going to make it more of a spectacle as it goes on." Collás chimes in. "[We want to be] more like a collective or some commune or cult, versus just a bunch of people up on stage playing guitars."

• phenomenalhandclapband.blogspot.com,
myspace.com/embassyproductions

	THE BROKEN WEST now or heaven		SHE & HIM volume one		RADAR BROS. auditorium
	LAMBCHOP oh (ohio)		JULIAN KOSTER the singing saw at christmastime		SPOON girls can tell <small>180 gm. vinyl reissue</small>
	WYE OAK if children		THE MAGNETIC FIELDS get lost <small>180 gm. vinyl reissue</small>		SPOON a series of sneaks <small>180 gm. vinyl reissue</small>

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	CAMERA OBSCURA underachievers please try harder <small>180 gm. vinyl reissue</small>		PORTASTATIC some small history		THE ROSEBUDS life like
	THE MAGNETIC FIELDS the charm of the highway strip <small>180 gm. vinyl reissue</small>		THE VOLCANO SUNS the bright orange years <small>forthcoming 1.27.09</small>		THE VOLCANO SUNS all night lotus party <small>forthcoming 1.27.09</small>



BROOKLYN'S HEAVY BASS CHAMPION DROP THE LIME
PLUMBS THE DEPTHS OF THE DARKSIDE.

night music

WORDS [VIVIAN HOST](#) PHOTOS [ADAM SCHNEIDER](#) STYLING [MAD MARIETTA](#)

It's 4 a.m. on a cold, deserted North London lane. The streetlight reflects in Luca Venezia's pointed patent brogues as he dances down the middle of the street, stabbing his gentleman's umbrella at the air in front of him, his knees and elbows cutting sharp angles against the sky. He turns to me and fires off a maniacal cackle, the moonlight glinting off his gold tooth. I realize I'm watching a mad magician. He's drunk all the laudanum, huffed all the ether, and is fully possessed by the powers of the night.

You can hear this voodoo dance in the music Venezia makes as Drop The Lime. It's followed him from frantic, romantic early breakcore releases on Ambush and Brooklyn Beats through his mid-2000s Tigerbeat6 albums, *This Means Forever* and *We Never Sleep*, and the wobble 'n' skurk of his current crop of singles, which pitch-shift and skank their way through a genre-bending array of bass-driven styles. For such a young artist—he just turned 27—Venezia already has a signature sound: chopped-up breaks making hairpin turns, breakdowns coming out of nowhere, a foundation of wobbling goblin bass often cut in with tropical, clacking snares. While his constant stream of remixes (of Moby, Blaqstarr, Midnight Juggernauts, Boy 8-Bit) kept him on many a DJ's radar in 2008, his solo work shows the real soul of Drop The Lime, particularly when he's delivering enigmatic lyrics in his singularly scratchy, bluesy notes.

THIS CHARMING MAN

"I like what happens when you enter darkness and just let go of the daylight," says Venezia. "Darkness, in a sense not only of nighttime and the night life, but as something that's so big and contains a million possibilities. There is no limit to darkness, you can make anything happen. You can reach any obstacles, you don't know what's ahead of you, and I like that idea of mystery."

By the time he's saying this, we're not in London anymore, and it's anything but dark outside. Since tequila is DTL's favorite vice (that's how he got his name), this interview is being conducted over late-afternoon margaritas in New York's East Village. And this isn't the first time we've danced with Patron. I first met Venezia in 2004, at one of the Bangers & Mash grime parties he was throwing with Team Shadetek. (Full disclosure: We now DJ together in a crew called Trouble & Bass.) Back then, on the cusp of 2006's transitional album *We Never Sleep*, he was a rave punk with a cowlicked mohawk and an all-over-print hoodie (silk-screened himself). Sitting before me now, he's a sort of rockabilly warlock: all skinny jeans, dagger tattoo, and pomaded pompadour. The look alludes to a childhood love of doo-wop and '60s soul, its Frank Sinatra-gone-goth overtones suggesting both his smooth-talking Sicilian background and the fashion tips picked up from touring (under the alias Curses!) with the stylish Frenchmen of the Institutbes label.

Venezia is addicted to change—to the exacerbation of some friends and fans—but his morphing isn't without meaning, and he pays just as much attention to the visual aesthetic of Drop The Lime as he does the music. "I definitely always had an image attached to Drop The Lime," Venezia explains. "I made all of the artwork for even my Ambush release 'cause I was so excited to have that first 12-inch out. I had my mom take press photos with me thugged out, but with my own

twist to it, like tight jeans and a gold chain, flashing my gold tooth—and my head was chopped off in the press pictures. I did it all myself in Photoshop and made myself a logo. I had the whole idea of romantic but still pretty violent imagery—ornamental guns and knives, birds being shot and bleeding with flowers coming out of them."

BORN TO ROCK

To hear Venezia tell it, he's always thirsted for the limelight. "I saw the movie *La Bamba* when I was seven, and I all of a sudden I wanted to be a rock star," he recalls. His parents got him guitar lessons and a drum machine, and by the age of 12, he was making up fake bands, complete with recorded songs, album covers, and videos. By the time he was enrolled at NYC's Professional Performing Arts high school he had a goofy public-access show called *Where's Willis Jones?* and his own clothing label called Alien Poser (a raver-pants-making parody of skatewear company Alien Workshop).

Venezia's sense of self and creative freedom can partially be chalked up to a wild, charmed childhood spent between Manhattan and Italy. Growing up around artists—his father is abstract painter Michael Venezia; his mother, Carol, is a photographer; family friends include minimalist masterminds Sol LeWitt and Dan Flavin—made it seem normal to make a living doing what you love. "There was always this process of creation in the apartment," he recalls. "My parents were always like, 'What new song did you do?' or 'Look at this photograph I took, what do you think?' or 'Look at this painting I'm working on.' It wasn't until I went to college that I really appreciated that support and the fact that the way I grew up was unique. But I used to just take it for granted. If I got mad at my dad I'd fling broccoli at his painting."

EXPERIMENTS IN SOUND

Attending college at Bard was really where Venezia had time to develop his music, and get his mind blown in the process. While he was already making computer music (Ed Rush & Optical-inspired drum & bass, to be exact), faculty members Bob Bielecki and Richard Teitelbaum introduced him to Max/MSP software, granular synthesis, and found-sound sampling. "We would be sitting in class and all of a sudden we would hear a chair squeaking, and I'd look up and Teitelbaum would be playing the chair as his instrument, recording it scraping on the floor," he remembers. "It was incredibly inspiring, like a big smack to the brain, and it really changed the way I thought about music."

Listening to experimental electronic artists like Aphex Twin and Squarepusher, Venezia pushed deeper into distortion, and you can definitely hear these influences on 2005's *This Means Forever*, a



"THERE IS NO LIMIT TO DARKNESS. YOU CAN MAKE ANYTHING HAPPEN...
I LIKE THAT IDEA OF MYSTERY."



compilation of ideas sprouted from Venezia's devil-may-care attitude. "It was like, 'Hey, what's up guys. I'm Drop The Lime and I don't give a shit about nothing. Try to dance to this,'" he explains. Its manic breaks, messed-with samples, and ear-piercing distortion topped with insane screamed lyrics about soundbwoys found favor in the breakcore scene, and he began playing underground gigs with the likes of Venetian Snares, Hearts of Darknesses, and Kid 606.

"My first show overseas was in Ghent, Belgium," he recalls. "I didn't want to play on the stage. I played on the floor. I'm singing, running around, cutting myself; it was my first time overseas and I wanted to give it my all. There was silence for what felt like five minutes after my set, but then the crowd went into a roaring rage. I knew right then that I was doing the right thing."

RISKY BUSINESS

Fast-forward three years and Drop The Lime's work sounds far from his breakcore roots; as recent singles like "Hear Me" and "What I Need" attest, Drop The Lime's mission these days is to rough-up more floor-friendly genres like dubstep, electro, and house.

"Singing more and having more of a dance sound to my music is where I felt more comfortable," he says, shrugging. "I always wanted that but I thought that it was more bad-ass and punk to be like, 'Fuck you four-to-the-floor, you guys are a bunch of sell-outs.' Until I moved to Berlin for six months. I realized I don't need to make fucked-up music; I don't need to be a dickhead. I want to dance. It's cool for people to dance."

That's not to say that Venezia's lost his attitude. "When I was doing breakcore, I was making music that was impossible to dance to in order to fuck with people. And that's still there. I'll make a dance tune where all of a sudden it will switch up into a swing beat and you will be like, 'What the fuck just happened?'"

"I like risk," says Venezia animatedly. "I like the adventure of experimenting with new sounds, new people. I think people are being too safe, honestly... What's exciting to me about electronic music is you have the capability of pushing the envelope that far; you can do stuff that a guitarist, a drummer, and a bass player can't do. You can really hit frequencies that those instruments can't."

FEELING ALIVE

Talk of frequencies is something you hear a lot in conjunction with Drop The Lime's name, particularly in reference to the brand of snarling, wobbly bass that is his trademark. People seldom mention that he sings, though it's his lyrics that reveal the romantic, pensive side that you may never get to see in a club. On *We Never Sleep*, he pines for New York, singing about summer Ecstasy trips on the swings and late nights. "Coal Oven Furnaces," for instance, was about "having a really hard time living in Berlin and wanting to leave and go back home... and having a coal furnace in the apartment." While the titles of his club singles ("I Love NY," "New York City Massacre") often pay homage to the city that made him, his album tracks are full of the kind of lyrics that can only happen after the afterparty

is over, when you're home alone sorting out your wild emotions. Recent number "I Need To Feel," with its lyrics "*It's hard to love forever when the fights they last all night... I need to feel alive.*" is a perfect example.

"That came about because I had just broken up with a girl I was with for a long time and it really pushed things into focusing on what makes me feel happy and really following my vision," he says.

"I'll be walking down the street just singing songs in my head," offers Venezia when asked about his writing process. "That's when I come up with the most creative things. I will sing melodies into my phone and then I'll come home and work it out into a song. I sometimes sing in Italian mixed with gibberish and then go back and translate what it sounds like—it's almost like speaking in tongues. It's really my true inner-self coming out. There's no mask or being afraid of, like, facing the harsh reality of the situation; you just go and sing whatever, and then you realize later what it means."

SEX BEAT

Drop The Lime is currently at work on a new album, due in summer 2009, featuring many guest vocalists; he's also rehearsing to perform his music with a live band. Though this next step in his fast-paced evolution could sound wildly different, Venezia points out that his philosophy remains more or less the same.

"For me, it's all about giving the music a punk and soulful attitude but also playing with the suspense and release of a song and working a crowd so that you build this emotional relationship within one song. That's what I was trying to do in breakcore, and that's what I'm trying to do now. Even though the bpm is different, it's still the same attack.

"I feel like I've always had the same romantic energy in my music. It's always had a sexy edge to it. It's really important to me to have this human touch and the most intense human touch would be something romantic, something sexual. I always want to indulge in everything that is the extreme. Indulging in the extreme of human sexuality and mixing that with the extreme of the musical experience—that's what I crave."

Drop The Lime's "Hear Me" is out now on Trouble & Bass/
Republic of Music. A full-length will be out summer 2009.
dropthelime.com



Read about Drop The Lime's
2008 faves at XLR8R.com/123extras.



How fast things changed this year. The dollar got weaker, attention spans got shorter, and music went to the extremes (both softer and louder). On dancefloors, DFA and Italians Do It Better captivated us with shades of disco magic, while we speculated about a variety of shadowy aliases (from Fake Blood to Burial). No Age, Dan Deacon, and The Death Set reinvented rock with digital gear, crowd participation, and that good old DIY spirit, while Jay Reatard and Fucked Up just concentrated on playing punk really, really well. The '90s returned, with Spiritualized and Portishead turning out new records, while the hip-hop underground was refreshed with modern thump from headz like Rustie, C.R.A.C., and FlyLo.



The analog-versus-digital debate raged on, but there was no denying that there were more ways to make music than ever before, and more people around the world making it. For our seventh annual Best Of feature we chose our favorite artists, then asked them to give us their highs and lows of the year. *Vivian Host & Ken Taylor*



See more of these artists' 2008 favorites at XLR8R.com/123extras.

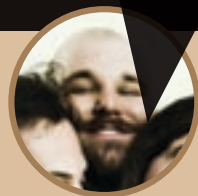
ARTIST

BEST



NO AGE

"We played a show with them and they covered the Urinals, GG Allin, and The Misfits. Afterwards we hung out and talked about Chopping Block (West Coast proto-power violence gods). It is rare to meet a band that are good people, have great taste, and are doing something exciting."



Damien Abraham,
Fucked Up

PAAVOHARJU

"Layers of warm, self-conscious mysticism, short-circuited and relaxing. It sounds like folk but the logic holding it together is 21st-century digital, melting ice on server-farms across foreign steppes."



DJ /rupture

TV ON THE RADIO

"They are tied with Devin the Dude for my favorite artist of the year. Both keep releasing classic albums."



Peter Beste,
photographer

FAKE BLOOD

"A string of excellent remixes, and now top tune 'Mars' has put this artist at the top of our tree. Is it breakbeat? Is it electro? Who really gives a fuck?"



Plump DJs

ESTELLE

"She is so nice and so talented, and really did her thing this year. 'American Boy' was so soulful and catchy, with kind of a Studio 54-esque vibe."



Kid Sister

ZOMBIE ZOMBIE

"Good record. Good live. Good synths. Good drums. Not-so-good shorts."



James Dyer,
DC Recordings

WORST



MADONNA

"It's a tie between Madonna and Justin Timberlake for that crap track they farted together recently. Proof that even gods make mistakes." *Plump DJs*

"I study the gospel of Madonna and have her face tattooed on my body, so if I didn't like her new album, *Hard Candy*, it must be really fucking bad." *Erin Magee, MadeMe*

ARTIST

BEST

LIL' WAYNE

"So hard-hitting, so much bass and snare. *The Carter III* and *The Drought II* had so much Wayne, and still incredibly emotional!"



Telepathe

MGMT

"This band brought out a beautifully fresh and nostalgic sound that painted mystery and lust."



Drop the Lime

CORNELIUS

"His live show with synchronized video and concepts was amazing and inspiring."



Nosaj Thing

JAY REATARD

"We predict he will keep getting bigger and bigger. He's on a roll right now."



Vivian Girls

NINJASONIK

"Ninja fuckin' Sonik, Sonik fuckin' Ninja! Their shows are crazy—like if Jabba's palace was between B-more and Brooklyn, and Han Solo was in new sneakers crowd-surfing with a flipped-up Suicidal Tendencies cap."

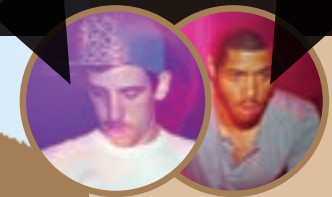


Johnny Siera,
The Death Set



FLYING LOTUS

"Dude is a machine! From the addictive *Los Angeles* on Warp, to touring high and wide to starting up the Brainfeeder label and turning in a slew of random remixes... The guy has clones. He also has promotional rolling papers, of which we've gone through a couple packs already."



Lazer Sword

KATY PERRY

"Oh, you know, that girl who sings 'I kissed a girl and I liked it.'" *Andy Butler, Hercules & Love Affair*

SOULJA BOY

"I believe he is responsible for dumbing down rap music to a whole new level. Trying to take on Ice-T was the final nail in his coffin." *Peter Beste, photographer*

JESSICA SIMPSON

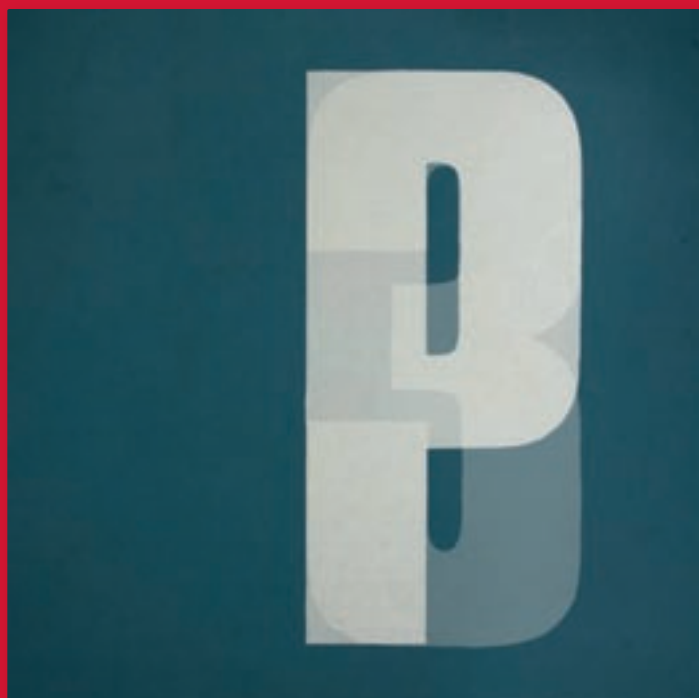
"She's already the worst and this year she topped it off by doing country music. I don't need to say more." *Freddie Rojas, Rojas Clothing*

AMY WINEHOUSE

"She was always in trouble with the drug thing this year. She should clean up her act because she is really talented." *eLZhi*

ALBUM

BEST



PORTISHEAD *THIRD* (Mercury)

"Yes, this is on most people's list but it's totally amazing! We were not fans previous to this record, but when we heard 'Machine Gun' we freaked out! It's like the most elegant post-apocalyptic sound ever! 'We Carry On' is totally insane, too! Super-classy. Super-goth."

"This album is the first I bought in ages. A fantastic mystical sound with so many brilliant melodies built into it. It was certainly worth the wait."



Abe Vigoda



Karl Oskar-Olsen,
WoodWood

BENGA *Diary of an Afro Warrior* (Tempa)

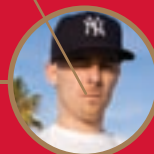
"This album showed me how musical and creative a mind he has. 'Night' is an instant classic, a very important song. Artists like him and Flying Lotus help me to understand the world I live in as an international artist."



Jose James

C.R.A.C. *The Piece Talks* (Tres)

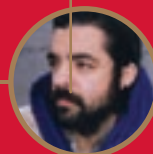
"I don't like any individual song. I just play the whole album. It's cohesive, has personality, and sounds like Blu and Ta'Raach had fun making it."



Alchemist

GANG GANG DANCE *St. Dymphna* (Social Registry)

"It sounds insane."



Joe DeNardo,
Growing

HERCULES & LOVE AFFAIR S/T (DFA)

"This was pretty untouchable. Mr. Butler, Kim-Ann, Nomi, and that Antony fella write awesome jams and Tim 'T. Diddy' Goldsworthy's production is so good it's silly. Okay, the last bit was a shameless shout to a good friend, but you can't deny that Goldsworthy's a clever cookie."



Holy Ghost!

METALLICA *Death Magnetic* (Mercury)

"I was so fucking excited to hear Rick Rubin was producing the new Metallica album and Bob Rock had been more or less told to sit this one out. It's too bad it still fucking sucks. Turns out, if you still sing like shit over halfway decent riffs that Kirk obviously wrote, you end up sounding like a cover band that got asked to write the new Metallica album. Such a bummer." *TJ Cowgill, Actual Pain*

"When will the bleeding stop? The only thing worse than Metallica trying to reinvent their sound is Metallica trying to recapture it. It is like a not-very-good Metallica cover band trying to write originals." *Damian Abraham, Fucked Up*

WORST



LABEL

BEST

MISSISSIPPI

"Weird and wonderful selection of forgotten fruit tastefully wrapped in handmade covers."



James Dyer,
DC Recordings

CADENZA

"I'm not allowed to mention [my label] Dynamic here, so I have to choose another one. I really like what Cadenza released this year. Maybe it's not new in '08 but it's all quality. 'Albertino' from Guido Schneider had some very impressive moments."



Stimming

MATADOR

"I think Cat Power really put them in a good place financially so they are starting to put out more experimental stuff again that can also ride in the mainstream. Being accessible and experimental is really important if we are to expand people's musical vocabularies. Diversity is the most important thing, just like in nature."



Mochipet

DYNAMOPHONE

"The output of this label is heartfelt and honest, with the most cohesive design aesthetic since the 23 Envelope days of 4AD."

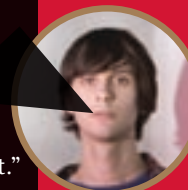


Mike Cadoo,
n5MD



DFA RECORDS

"Just when you thought you had them pegged, they come out with a whole new crop of floor-fillers. Hercules & Love Affair, Holy Ghost!, and The Juan MacLean have been staples of our DJ sets all year. Juan's 'Happy House' is piano-wielding, steamy, shirtless house at its finest."



Tim Hoey,
Cut Copy

YOU LOVED THEM, YOU HATED THEM

1. CRYSTAL CASTLES
2. V-NECK T-SHIRTS
3. GIRL TALK
4. SOCIAL NETWORKING APPS
5. AMERICAN APPAREL
6. COLDPLAY

FIVE BEST DANCEHALL ARTISTS OF 2008 BY TOMAS PALERMO

1. VYBZ KARTEL

Had a blazing last half of 2008 with tunes like "Trailer Load of Money," "Life Sweet," and "Body Wine," plus launched both signature rum and condom lines. Vybz is name brand!

2. MAVADO

His 2007 was hard to follow up, but he came with "On the Rock," "Money Changer," and other anthems that had JA on lock.

3. BUSY SIGNAL

His big hits "Jail" and "These are the Days" were late-'07 singles that ruled '08; he followed them with strong singles like "Street Sit'in" (Big Ship) and "Loaded" (Juice Boxx) that kept him on top.

4. TIMBERLEE

Women took full control in '08, including Spice, Natalie Storm, Tifa, and Stacious, but Timba's playful lyrics kept DJs, casual fans, and dancers tuned in and shocking out.

5. ERUP

His hit "Click My Finger" redefined swagger. Erup's cool but menacing flow is slaying new fans daily. He'll be big in zero-nine.



BEST

FIVE AWESOME BALTIMORE ARTISTS



Victoria Legrand,
Beach House

FUTURE ISLANDS

"It's really innocent, playful pop music. It's driving, very melodic, and it's got some soul in it, plus the lead singer physically resembles Tom Jones crossed with Jack Black."

LESSER GONZALEZ ALVAREZ

"He writes absolutely beautiful, very intricate, very spellbinding pop."

ADVENTURE

"It sounds like Pez dispensers. He's this all-American, adorable, huge, tall redhead who plays music that sounds like a computer game. His mannerisms while he's playing are very innocent and charming; he looks like a character from the late '50s."

MARK BROWN

"He's currently doing the videos on this Baltimore Round Robin tour. He has this amazing video of an Olympic race that looks like a migraine on acid. The video stuff he makes is not just idle projection, it's art."

VIDEO HIPPOS

"They make me feel the way that My Bloody Valentine does, except that they're a lot lighter and brighter and faster and much more minimal. It's super-fast and upbeat but with big, swirling waves of emotions."

NEW CUMBIA

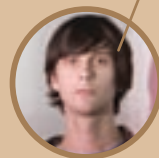
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DJ /rupture

THE RETURN OF DISCO AND BALEARIC

"I think everyone has gotten tired ears from the saturation of distorted electro over the last couple of years. Finally, we get to dance together instead of making a mosh pit and spitting beer everywhere."



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THE RESURGENCE OF AFROBEAT

"As evidenced by bands like Antibalas and Vampire Weekend, and especially the stunning off-Broadway musical *Fela!*"



Blake Leyh,
music supervisor, *The Wire*

LAZER BASS

"I really like the slowed-down electronic beats that Rustie, Glitch Mob, and *XLR8R*'s own Lazer Sword are doing. You can stick so much more into the rhythm when the up and down beats are that far apart."

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LO-FI PUNK/ SHITGAZE

"This is a no-brainer for us—we love lo-fi punk/shitgaze. Music like this is great because it's really catchy but still not immediately accessible to the average listener."



Vivian Girls

WORST

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"What's up with stuff like Jonas Brothers? When I was nine years old my favorite music was made by the Rolling Stones, Elvis Presley, and Blondie. Kids today, I tell ya." *Andrew Jeffrey Wright*

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BEST

SHARY BOYLE

"She draws things like a colorful witch French-kissing a boy while riding on the back of a horse made of a cloud that is flowing out of a crying girl that is lying in a giant, mysterious green hand with sharp nails and pink and blue veins. Holy shit."



Matt Furie

TAUBA AUERBACH

"Her work is weirdly handmade and yet kind of perfect. Conceptually it contains both simplicity and depth. It's math-centric, meditative, repetitive, and great-looking."



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NECKFACE

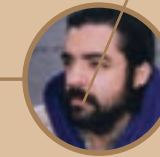
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Jennifer Wannaruchue,
Worship Worthy

BJORN COPELAND

"Bjorn from Black Dice's solo show at Jack Hanley Gallery was amazing. It was hard to look away."



Joe DeNardo,
Growing

MY BEST LIVE SHOW



Bradford Cox,
Deerhunter/Atlas Sound

"I'm pretty self-critical about live performances. I really only remember the bad ones. My favorite experience live would be joining Stereolab on stage for their encore. Jamming with Stereolab is something that would make the teenage me hyperventilate. I high-fived myself for that one."

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PHOTO: MARK BARTLING

BLOG HOUSE

"Too many disposable remixes." *Nosaj Thing*

TIKA TIKA TECHNO

"Too much swing and too little funk." *Magda, Minus*

LACK OF CONFRONTATION

"It's a hater-free zone right here, but more GG Allin-style confrontation at live shows would be interesting... perhaps minus the shit-tossing and misogyny." *Johnny Siera, The Death Set*

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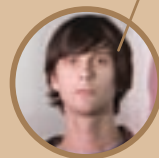
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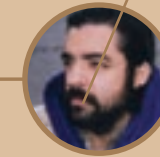
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BEST



THE "BOYFRIEND" LOOK

"When baggy, boyfriend jeans came back, I was like, 'Yes! Finally!' Tight jeans are getting so cliché, especially those girls in L.A. who wear them tucked into their t-strap heels."



Kid Sister

"I like denim chambray shirts, especially when they're men's shirts worn by women. In fact, the whole boyfriend look is very lovely."



Karl Oskar-Olsen,
WoodWood

MONOCHROMATIC COLOR SCHEMES

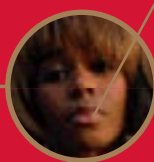
"I mean simple, clean, classic looks. This summer I was sleeveless in Seattle. It was all about black or white shirts with straight black jeans and bleached authentic Vans. I wore that everyday."



TJ Cowgill,
Actual Pain

SHOULDER PADS

"I like them, and I think they're about to make a comeback."



Santogold

NATIVE AMERICAN PRINTS



Andy Butler,
Hercules & Love Affair

ALPARAGATAS

"I'm happy that women are wearing flat shoes, like *alparagatas* (Argentinian slip-on old-lady shoes). That company Tom's makes a yuppie version."



Disco Shawn,
Bersa Discos

HENRIK VIBSKOV

"He's a Danish renaissance man. Real cool."



Freeman,
CTRL Clothing

WORST



ED HARDY AND CHRISTIAN AUDIGIER

"I don't know when people in L.A. are going to get with it and realize those clothes are hideous. Tattoos are only cool if they are real!" *Erin Magee, MadeMe*

CROCS WITH CHARMS

"The only thing worse than Crocs are Crocs with charms. They're kind of disturbing—like clowns in a children's hospital." *Magda, Minus*

SHUTTER SHADES

"Fuck those things! Let's see... Should I go around looking like a dumb ass who can barely see, running into shit every second, or should I just leave 'em alone and let my eyeballs breathe? The shit is played." *Lazer Sword*

BEST

M.I.S.S. CREW'S TOP 10 BRANDS OF 2008

1. BIJULES
Proving that hair extensions aren't just for your head and that lingerie is the new jewelry.

2. BRIAN LICHTENBERG
Dare we say, the new Jeremy Scott?

3. CUBANNIE LINKS
Hooking up your ears, one link at a time.

4. DARKHORSE
A guy who finally gets it... Giving the ladies what they need.

5. DR. ROMANELLI X FRUITION
Taking "reduce, reuse, recycle" to the next level.

6. FLEATHERS
Putting scraps of leather to good use—really, really, really good use! Our ears say thank you!

7. LA FEMME GNS
Stepping up the sneaker game for ladies. Finally sneakers that aren't pink!

8. LESPORTSAC ARTIST IN RESIDENCE SERIES
Over-sized hardware and trims and, finally, bags that can double as sleeping accommodations.

9. MELISSA SHOES COLLABORATIVE PROJECTS
Continuing to take jelly shoes to the next level. We don't care about sweaty feet, especially when we're wearing Vivienne Westwood or Alexander Herchcovitch.

10. PEGGY NOLAND
Constantly pushing the limits and bringing new meaning to "kidult" fashion. Diapers, anyone?

misscrew.com

GAKKEN SX-150 ANALOG SYNTHESIZER

"It came packaged in a Japanese science magazine that you can buy at Tower. Pin-controlled with a speaker. The resonance control is a switch. The magazine looks really cool, too, with features on all the great synth makers of the past and present, but unfortunately I can't read Japanese."



The Mole

RETRO INSTRUMENTS STA-LEVEL COMPRESSOR

"It's a clone of an old 1950s Gates broadcast compressor. I've been using it on everything from vocals to drum machines, bringing out so many nuances and details previously unheard."



Matthew Dear

INTUA BEATMAKER IPHONE DRUM SOFTWARE

"It's like a mini virtual MPC/beat sketchpad for the iPhone. The most portable electronic beatmaking device ever."



Maga Bo

UAD TELETRONIX LA-2A COMPRESSOR

"It sounds great on almost everything! And it looks pretty nice too!"



Hans-Peter Lindstrom



MOOG MINIMOOG VOYAGER OLD SCHOOL SYNTHESIZER

"It has that amazingly fat analog sound with the ability to sculpt sounds in a new fashion. The LFO is sick, and I love the classic filter! The modulation you can achieve is just brilliant. It makes you realize what is missing in a lot of today's 'digital only' techno scene... phatness and warmth!"



Jay Haze

HIPSTERS

"It seems that it's an urban guy thing and it looks like most of these dudes have serious symptoms of PMS, fatigue, irritability, anger, depression, and breast tenderness." *Freeman, CTRL Clothing*

HIGH-WAISTED JEANS

"What's up with the girls in the super-high-waisted jeans? Actually, our friend Starrett and Nick's sister Lilli wear them and look great, but they're classy broads who would look great in Hammer pants and a football jersey. Everyone else, move on." *Holy Ghost!*

STILL FLUO

"I might get hunted down for this one, but I think the whole 'flouro pixel tech' look was only good for a few months. Let's pray the rest of middle America doesn't catch onto it." *Jennifer Wannaruchue, Worship Worthy*

THE KANYE LOOK

"*Keffiyehs* (those Arab scarves), all-over print tees, and baggy-ass jeans like it's still 1992. Kanon! Get 'up to di times,' like Vybz Kartel says." *Jahphet Landis, The Death Set*

the
OTHER
WEST COAST

A POSTCARD FROM GOTHENBURG, SWEDEN, WHERE
THE WATER'S CLEAN, THE AIR IS CRISP, AND THE MUSIC
IS BLISSFULLY UNCLASSIFIABLE.

The last few years have been big for Scandinavia, with the dulcet disco of Lindström and Todd Terje tearing up the underground and Robyn and The Knife getting people to reexamine the pop charts, not to mention the reinvigorated interest in Scando rock from

International Noise Conspiracy to Norwegian black metal. But something far less shiny and more intimate has been brewing on Sweden's West Coast, in the port town of Gothenburg (Göteborg to the natives). Home to a massive melodic death metal scene and a pescatarian

market called the Fish Church, Gothenburg has quietly incubated some of the most interesting and unpredictable acts from the laid-back yet stylish end of the indie spectrum. Spiritually akin to West Coast cities everywhere—San Francisco, Bristol, Cape

Town—Gothenburg appears to have, if not a signature sound, then its own artful way of doing things, as we found out when we caught up with lysergic disco-dub duo Studio, future-soul survivors Little Dragon, and post-doo-wop daredevil El Perro Del Mar. *Vivian Host*



FROM LEFT: RASMUS HÄGG, DAN LISSVIK

STUDIO PHOTO [KARL ISAKSON](#)

STUDIO

COSMIC AND PSYCHEDELIC COASTAL POP FROM
TWO TOTALLY DO-IT-YOURSELF DUDES.

The world does not need another post-psych jam band. And while art-rock dudes, obscure vinyl collectors, and bongo enthusiasts may vehemently disagree, there's no denying that the indie infrastructure has been overrun by bands carrying the noodly jam sessions a little too far. This is not true of the band known simply as Studio. On their 2007 full-length, *West Coast*, the duo of Dan Lissvik and Rasmus Hägg revamp psych's once-fresh tripper essence with a heavy application of complex Afrobeat percussion, windy synth textures, and plenty of New Order-making-out-with-King-Tubby guitar lines.

Released via the members' own Information imprint, *West Coast* (which didn't really catch on until this year) streams through six of the most subtle, bass-heavy bonfire mind-blowers you've ever heard. Slow burners like "Life's a Beach," "Indo," and the 16-minute "Out There" ride dubby vibe winds to the edge of the mindscape, yet remain more pop-structured

than your standard spaced-out bong-rip soundtrack (though they definitely work for hesh sessions). "The main concept behind Studio was to go straight, do [it ourselves], and bypass [any] third party," says Lissvik via email. "DIY consensus was, and still is, a big part of the Studio [approach]. We really don't know what the next thing will be. It has always been like that and it always be."

Hägg agrees. "It's all about the beauty of not knowing."

The band's overall aesthetic continues along this psychedelic DIY train, with Hägg producing all of the album artwork. Each of the band's releases is adorned with spheres, sometimes filled with a spectrum of colors (as on the EPs *Yearbook 1* and *2*), sometimes completely minimal (*West Coast* and its subsequent singles). The overall effect is a humble, mystic consistency often missing from other "cosmic" outfits.

Taking cues from the members' respective

punk pasts, the duo's recently released remix compilation, *Yearbook 2*, indicates the outfit's ability to turn any track into its own West Coast hybrid, no matter how obscure or poppy the original may be. To that end, they've crafted an epic, guitar-driven remake of Kylie Minogue's 2007 single "2 Hearts" and a sensitive and profoundly catchy renovation of fellow Swedish outfit Shout Out Louds' "Impossible." "It's really not about the artist when you remix," states Hägg. "You can choose to work with only really cool, hip-shit artists and let that lead your way, but the only thing that's been interesting for us is to be able to tweak something [that is], in our opinion, not too good into something that we think is interesting in some way. It might seem a bit cocky but it's true."

Hägg's and Lissvik's instrumentation is as diverse as their inspiration, which includes bands as eclectic as Throbbing Gristle, Happy Mondays, Death, Alice In Chains, Alan Parsons

WORDS FRED MIKETA PHOTO KARL ISAKSON



FROM LEFT: RASMUS HÄGG, DAN LISSVIK

Project, and Def Leppard (naturally). "I used to be very, very dogmatic when I listened to music as a teenager and disliked a lot of stuff that I now completely have to kneel in front of," says Hägg. "And that's a lovely thing. There are still a lot of things I want to dig deeper into, but I tend to save a little bit of music history for later, to be able to be knocked over and over again, which happens more and more seldom with contemporary stuff in my opinion."

However unimpressed Studio may be with current bands, their label, Information, has nonetheless managed

to release groundbreaking new records from all over. Outside-of-the-box psych enterprises Fontän, A Mountain of One, and Century all call the label home.

"Century is a part of the Information legacy," explains Hägg. "We couldn't resist the beautiful band name, and also we're friends; that's how we recruit people to our label. One of the Centuries—Leon, the 1300th one—is also our light magician when we play live," continues Hägg, expounding upon the lengths Studio will go to for things to be exactly the way they want them. "Last year we brought this fluorescent lamp set-up on tour, so we

had to bring this huge electric unit just to control the whole thing. It was worth it. It was massive."

inf000.com, myspace.com/ssstudio

Little Dragon

A COLD-BUTTERED SOUL BAND GIVES
R&B THE SWEDISH MESSAGE.

It's hard to discuss Little Dragon without starting with the voice. You don't want to shortchange musicians Fredrik Källgren Wallin (bass), Erik Bodin (drums), and Håkan Wirenstrand (keyboards), or the intoxicating, labyrinthine rhythms that form the axis of the group's self-titled debut album, but it's singer Yukimi Nagano that seems to really get people worked up. (Just look at the YouTube comments for the band's three videos.) She might be a half-Japanese vocalist from Sweden but, on tracks like "Constant Surprises" and "Recommendation," Nagano conjures the best elements of American R&B. With her graceful, wispy voice and a tendency to stretch vowels into languorous moans, more than a few folks have likened her to the seemingly incomparable Erykah Badu (including Badu herself, who, upon hearing Little Dragon for the first time in the presence of this writer, was ecstatic to learn she'd influenced music so exotic).

"Everyone listened to really different music

growing up, which is why there are so many elements in our [sound]," Nagano says over the phone from the group's homebase in Gothenburg. "Håkan grew up with Swedish folk. I've always liked a lot of American R&B myself. Growing up, Prince was not very cool to listen to in Sweden. I listened to him every day after school but I'd hide my CD when my friends came over."

As a child, Nagano—born to a Japanese father and an American mother—spent her summers in California. She initially made her mark as a vocalist on the nu-jazz circuit, but conjuring Billie Holiday for bedroom Blakeys like Koop and Stateless was never her thing. "None of the other things I've done really matter," says Nagano, the sometime collaborator (and girlfriend) of Gothenburg troubadour José González. (Bodin also plays drums in Gonzalez's band.) "I've been longing to write my own music, and release the music I write with the band."

Borne of a high-school friendship between Nagano, Källgren, and Bodin, the unit existed informally for years before dubbing themselves Little Dragon five years ago. "We've never been very productive and we're not very business-minded," says Nagano—who, by virtue of her flawless English, acts as a spokesperson for the band during our conversation (though Källgren is also on the line). "We never thought to send out demos. So it sort of became the playground where you just go to the studio and make music. Finally, we felt we had so much ideas and music, it'd be silly not to do something."

The band's first single, "Test" b/w "Surprise," made a near-instant splash in England, despite the fact that just 1,000 7-inch vinyl copies were pressed. With Rough Trade naming the record "single of the week" and influential DJs like Gilles Peterson bigging up "Test," London-based Peacefrog Records commissioned their eponymous debut album, which was released in Europe in September 2007.



FROM LEFT: HÅKAN WIRENSTRAND, YUKIMI NAGANO, ERIK BODIN AND F

The band—whose members don't exactly qualify as professional producers—handled every aspect of the LP's recording themselves, right down to the final mixes. You'd never know it, though; while tracks run the gamut from minor-key piano ballads (the album-opening "Test") to bubbly pop ("Recommendation") and downtempo space dub ("Forever"), it has the continuity of a producer-driven release.

"We're not interested at all in having someone else's mind [involved]," Nagano says of the lack of outside production. "And most of [the remixes] people have done for us have been really bad. You dream that

once you have a label you'll get the people you want, like, 'Couldn't you ask Madlib or someone we really respect to do something interesting?' It got to the point where, if this was the way it [was] gonna be, then we should just do it ourselves."

With another album's worth of material already in the bag—and set for European release on Peacefrog in the spring—the band has already developed a significant U.S. following despite their lack of distribution here. But with pivotal hip-hop DJs like Funkmaster Flex spinning Röyksopp's "Remind Me" and Norway's Stargate supplying beats to Beyoncé and Ne-Yo (not

to mention running a new label with Jay-Z), the idea of a Scandinavian R&B band gaining serious traction Stateside is beginning to seem like a realistic possibility.

In fact, Nagano says, the best reception they've gotten to date was at a show in L.A. in April. "I don't know if it's because we're used to European people being more reserved but Americans were so like, 'Wahhhhh!!!" Nagano says, imitating the crowd's screams. "We felt, if this is the best moment in our musical career, it's okay."

little-dragon.se

THE OTHER WEST COAST

el Perro del Mar

A GOTHENBURG GUIDING LIGHT FOLLOWS
HER OWN ARTISTIC COMPASS.

Even though she's a native of Gothenburg, Sarah Assbring was, for a stretch, strangely disconnected from her hometown's fertile music community. The angelic singer-songwriter, who goes by the cryptic handle El Perro Del Mar, "really didn't know what was going on in Gothenburg at first," she says, hanging out backstage at NYC venue Joe's Pub while on tour with fellow Swedish pop maven Lykke Li earlier this year. But after releasing some of her own songs in 2003, she found that like-minded musicians such as José González and Jens Lekman were working right under her nose. It was a friendship with Lekman that helped Assbring's music find a worldwide audience.

Her first LP, 2006's *El Perro Del Mar* (The Control Group), was a collection of material from early EPs and singles that showcased her knack for combining catchy doo-wop (seriously, hooks for *days*) with a dark lyrical sensibility. But the album's follow-up, 2008's mournful *From the Valley to the Stars*, takes a sharp turn in both content and tone.

"I'm the kind of person who feels I need to react against what I've done before," explains Assbring, who gravitated towards a conceptual piece (an album with a capital A) to counterbalance *El Perro Del Mar's* simple pop songs. *From the Valley to the Stars* is remarkable not so much for its individual tracks (which often bleed together) but as a whole package with a running existential theme.

The life-and-death topics of the album were partly inspired by real events. "A very important person in my life passed away—that was the trigger—but I was at a time in my life where I was really open to thinking about these things," she offers. Still, the record isn't overly dark or brooding, and Assbring thinks of it as rather positive in spirit. "It's about staring the truth of existence in the eye and coming out the other end... realizing that whatever is behind it all, whatever comes after, it's a good thing," she muses. "Life is a good thing."

Judging from the mixed critical response to *From the Valley to the Stars*, it seems not everyone got the concept. Some fans and

reviewers mourned the absence of hook-y numbers like "God Knows (You Gotta Give to Get)" and "It's All Good." But Sarah's not sweating it. "During the work I never really thought about what people would think of it, or if they'd think it wasn't really corresponding to what I've done before," she says, explaining that she needed to stay true to her artistic ideals. "This is my life, [music] is what I want to continue doing. To be able to do my best, I need to feel that I'm doing what I really *have* to do. That's what I admire other artists for."

Assbring plans to temporarily relocate to NYC to work on her next record. Nothing's set in stone yet—she's considering a close collaboration with another artist that she won't name—but fans would be wise to expect another departure in style. "Since I go so deeply into what I do, when it's done I'm totally drained and finished with it," she explains. "I will probably do something that is, for me at least, a reaction against the last album."

From the Valley to the Stars is out now on The Control Group. elperrodelmar.com



TOTALLY SWEDE! FIVE MORE GOTHENBURG ACTS WORTH YOUR EARSPACE.



KRISTOFFER RAGNSTAM

Ragnstam used to sell homemade drum kits, and a strong sense of rhythm pervades his Beck-esque jumble-sale pop, with its confessional sung/spoken lyrics dancing upon a magically realist backdrop of music-box synths, handclaps, and plenty of muffled snares 'n' kicks. ragnstam.se



JOHAN AGEBJÖRN

Best known for playing the svengali role behind disco chanteuse Sally Shapiro on her 2006 album, *Disco Romance*, Agebjörn has recently turned his production chops towards similarly spacey ambient music, as heard on his debut solo outing, *Mossebo* (Lotuspike). johanagerbjorn.info



JOSÉ GONZÁLEZ

This former punk/hardcore guitarist is noted for his crystal-clear voice, classical guitar talents, and his poignant covers of The Knife's "Heartbeats" and Massive Attack's "Teardrop." He also plays guitar and sings in the post-rock and folk-inspired band Junip. jose-gonzalez.com



JENS LEKMAN

From the Gothenburg suburb of Angered, Lekman makes guitar-driven twee pop with clever lyrics and cute touches, in the vein of Magnetic Fields and Belle & Sebastian. jenslekman.com



LOVE IS ALL

A confusing, chaotic pile of angular party rock anchored by squealing synths, skronking sax, and Josephine Olausson's quirky, shouted vocals. *A Hundred Things That Keep Me Up at Night*, their sophomore album, was just released on What's Your Rupture? loveisallright.blogspot.com

REVISITING SHOEGAZE
ROCK WITH THE BANDS
WHO STARTED IT ALL
(RIDE, CHAPTERHOUSE,
SLOWDIVE), AND NEW
ACTS WHO'VE FOUND
THEMSELVES UNDER
THE INFLUENCE.

VAPOUR TRAILS

WORDS [PATRICK SISSON](#)



It's known as the Holocaust, but it's greeted like the rapture. A sound engineer says it sounds "pretty similar to a jet taking off," and it has the decibel readings to prove it (roughly 130). "The sound moved my face," blogged Deerhunter's Bradford Cox. "My balls retracted."

That sound is the live rendition of "You Made Me Realise," the signature track with which My Bloody Valentine, reformed after 13 years of silence, has been ending each of its reunion-tour sets—a cacophonous, hypnotic, fill-the-void version built from a multi-octave sea of bent tones.

"It's interesting and fun, in a cruel way, watching the audience react as the song progresses," says Ger Colclough, a monitor engineer on the tour. "You can see the different emotions and feelings they go through as the song reaches its peak, from the fascinated look, disbelief look, shocked look, and back to the final look of amazement."

This sonic gut-check has become part of the mythology of My Bloody Valentine, and of the shoegaze sound itself. Once dubbed "the scene that celebrates itself," the term "shoegaze" was christened in late-'80s England to describe a group of bands who combined ethereal, swirling vocals and layer upon layer of distorted, bent, and flanged guitar. Ultimately, it referred more to these floppy-haired bands' lack of rock 'n' roll antics on-stage—their habit of gazing downward at their myriad guitar pedals—than their music. While hazy and narcotic-sounding, the bands that fell under this banner were far from homogenous. If anything, their common link was expanding the sonic vocabulary (if not always at MBV's deafening levels).

With modern acts like Ulrich Schnauss and Asobi Seksu heavily inspired by the shoegaze sound, the recent release from Spiritualized (an offshoot of the even gazy-er Spacemen 3), and reunions of seminal bands like My Bloody Valentine and Swervedriver, we decided to track down members of Slowdive, Lush, Ride, Chapterhouse, and more to talk about the glory days and the genre's continued relevance.



SHOE-INS

Miki Berenyi (Lush singer/guitarist)

"Shoegazing was originally a slag-off term. My partner [K.J. "Moose" McKillop], who was the guitarist in Moose, claims that it was originally leveled at his band. Apparently the journo was referring to the bank of effects pedals he had strewn across the stage that he had to keep staring at in order to operate. And then it just became a generic term for all those bands that had a big, sweeping, effects-laden sound, but all stood resolutely still on stage."

Andy Sherriff (Chapterhouse singer/guitarist)

"For us, it had quite a lot to do with the fact that we weren't too good at singing and playing at the same time, so we had to look down at the guitar all the time to see. We played a lot of barre chords, chords that go up and down the guitar neck, so you were kind of looking where you were going."

Adam Franklin (Swervedriver singer/guitarist)

"Shoegaze wasn't a favorable term when it first appeared. Partly, you think about the bands having sloppy fringes, stripy shirts, and Chelsea boots."

Brad Laner (Medicine singer/guitarist)

"It never had any resonance for me. If you see any footage of us, we were jumping around and being spazzy all the time. We rocked out. I don't think you'll find any band of that period that would identify itself as a shoegaze band, and any band that identifies itself as that now is probably not worth listening to."

Miki Berenyi (Lush)

"Funnily enough, [the tagline] 'the scene that celebrates itself' was actually the invention of Steve Sutherland, then editor of the *Melody Maker*, and was originally meant as a compliment! It referred to the fact that, as a movement, we were actually all very friendly and supportive of each other, rather than backbiting and sniping, which was supposedly the norm. It was actually pretty annoying getting lumped in with bands we didn't think we sounded anything like, particularly because such comparisons were more often used against us."

Andy Sherriff (Chapterhouse)

"Now the term has been appropriated by fans, the way a lot of insults are. And people use it in a way that's totally non-derogatory."

UNDER THE INFLUENCE

The typically cited sonic blueprint for shoegaze's ebb and squall is a holy trinity of '80s U.K. bands: Cocteau Twins, The Jesus and Mary Chain, and My Bloody Valentine. But common musical threads between the different bands include garage rock, '60s psych, and American indie bands like Sonic Youth and Dinosaur Jr.

Stephen Patman (Chapterhouse singer/guitarist)

"It was a dark period for music in the '80s. The mainstream was absolutely dire. It was impossible to get heard on the radio if you were a guitar band... I think there was a real counterculture. Whenever there is a counterculture, I think that's healthy for the music because it's something to fight against, something to prove."

Eric Green (director, *Beautiful Noise*)

"Even though the '80s were rocky musical years, that DIY/punk mentality resounded, not only through musicians, but labels as well. People starting labels, from Mute to Rough Trade to 4AD to Creation, were fairly unconventional label heads who said, 'Fuck it, I like this group,' or, 'This is intriguing,' not thinking about [how it would] sell."

Neil Halstead
(Slowdive singer/guitarist)

"We were huge My Bloody Valentine fans. Christian [Savill, Slowdive guitarist] used to run an MBV fanzine, and we used to go up and see them when they were signed to Cherry Red, when they were a really jangly indie band. The Jesus and Mary Chain and The Smiths also had this huge impact. Lots of 16-year-olds heard those records for the first time, and it was like, 'This is real, not shiny.' I think it's kind of the way we thought about music and the music we wanted to make."

Stephen Patman (Chapterhouse)

"There was a big '60s garage band revival [through the] *Nuggets* compilations. Listening to those psych bands was definitely an influence. We were trying to make psychedelic in a contemporary way."

Ulrich Schnauss (electronic producer)

"Things weren't going well for a lot of people, after 10 years of the Thatcher government in England. People basically just wanted to escape, whether it was with their eyes closed at a Slowdive gig or raving all weekend on Ecstasy. I think the reason why [this kind of music] is happening at the moment [is that] a lot of people once again have that same sort of desire to escape."

YOUNG LORDS

Unlike the concurrent "Madchester" scene, the shoegaze sound wasn't identified with one city. Chapterhouse and Slowdive were from Reading, Ride and Suvervedriver came from Oxford, and Lush from London.

Neil Halstead (Slowdive)

"Rachel [Goswell, Slowdive vocalist] and I were at primary school together. We've known each other since we were five or six. When we were in secondary school, we had a band called the Pumpkin Fairies. When we formed Slowdive, we advertised for a female guitarist. [Christian] was the only applicant and offered to wear a dress, and that was it."

Mark Gardener
(Ride singer/guitarist)

"We were art-school boys. I think we were doing a project about painting movement, so we were into that whole thing of movement, and ride cymbals—and we all thought Ride could be a name for this band. It was all part of the journey, and it had a good sexual connotation as well, which is always good for a band name."

Miki Berenyi (Lush)

"I met Emma Anderson [Lush guitarist/singer] at age 13 and we became part of a group of friends who got very into music. London is a great place for that. By the time we were 15 we were going to see bands play as often as



ABOVE: RIDE; LUSH'S MIKI BERENYI (BELOW) AND CHRIS ACLAND (RIGHT).



possible, sometimes five times a week! Gigs were cheap back then, and we didn't drink, so it was affordable even for a 15-year-old. But we were terribly young and shy, and didn't know anyone, so we started a fanzine called *Alphabet Soup*. The theory was that it would give us a legit reason to talk to bands and a way of getting to know people. The reality was that we were absolutely awful at interviews and the 'zine was completely juvenile and silly and full of smutty jokes and toilet humor, which we thought was absolutely hilarious."

STURM UND DRONE

*Aside from being incredibly loud, shoegaze bands experimented with ways to use guitars and effects; vocals were often treated as another instrument. Some have said that the incorporation of electronic dance elements into certain albums—Slowdive toyed with ambient effects on their home-recorded *Pygmalion*, bands like Chapterhouse, James, and Seefeel were repeatedly remixed by electronic artists—presaged later developments in post-rock and electronica.*

Eric Green (Beautiful Noise)

"There was a vibe, an air of mystery. [It was] beautiful music that was somewhat abrasive. I like the way a lot of the groups juxtaposed that abrasiveness with beauty."

Miki Berenyi (Lush)

"Probably what was more of an influence was the fact that we couldn't really play or sing and were limited in what we could achieve musically! Hence the loud guitars and wan vocals. Nothing planned—we were just making virtue out of necessity!"

Neil Halstead (Slowdive)

"[The noise] was a problem before we had a record deal, because every club we ever played in Reading wouldn't let us back. They would hear us play once and say, 'Don't worry about coming back.'"

Brad Laner (Medicine)

"At the time, it was really funny—everyone was comparing notes about their pedal boards. I thought it was kind of dumb, like a bunch of Guitar Center employees at lunch. We were never a gear band. I went out of my way to say I played through a tape deck. The end result is the mystery. If you know how you got there, it's not as mysterious."

Andy Sherriff (Chapterhouse)

"It was less about the guitarmanship. It wasn't about riffing away, it was about creating a sort of atmosphere with droning and chords."

Stephen Patman (Chapterhouse)

"We were almost anti- that kind of musicianship. For us, that was masturbation. We hated that foot-on-the-monitor kind of rock heroics. I'm a firm believer that it shouldn't matter how you got a sound. It's the sound that matters. A lot of people said, 'All you have to do is play a chord, with all the effects you're using.' But that's not the point. The whole point was that we were choosing to play one chord for a specific effect."

Brad Laner (Medicine)

"Most of these bands couldn't really sing. If you hear live recordings, all of these bands are falling all over themselves. It's all about the recordings... It's all about studio craft, in the same way that The Beatles didn't play their psychedelic material live. What makes those albums great is they were made without regard to playing live. Perhaps it was in anticipation of the electronica stuff—rock bands getting tired of the old vocabulary, and trying out new sounds. Maybe [shoegaze] anticipated that."

CREATIONISM

*Many shoegaze acts, including Slowdive and My Bloody Valentine, were signed to Creation, the label founded in 1982 by charismatic Scottish manager and mogul Alan McGee. Famous as the home of Primal Scream and The Jesus and Mary Chain, the label almost went out of business during the protracted, expensive recording of MBV's *Loveless*, but was saved by signing Oasis in 1994.*

Neil Halstead (Slowdive)

"We were 16, 17 when [Alan McGee] signed us. He was just kind of as we imagined. He was this dude in sunglasses, very Scottish; he was charismatic and we all liked him off the bat. I think their strength as a label was just putting bands in a studio and putting out records based on the idea that they liked a song or a particular thing. They were quite willing to see what would occur. Sometimes it did cost them too much money... The first recording session we did, McGee scrapped it all. We had never gone into a studio with a producer, so we did what we felt like doing."

Brad Laner (Medicine)

"I thought he was this out-of-control party animal. I could barely understand him with that Scottish accent..."



Mark Gardener (Ride)

"I think there was sort of a stand-up quality of bands and the label at the time—and, just like Factory was in the early days, it was sort of a totally rock 'n' roll label. You'd go to meetings on Friday and leave on Monday, that sort of thing. [The Creation office] was a complete madhouse, really. It didn't have anything together or organized. It was a load of people running on speed pills and diet pills and bugged up. I know there were a lot of bouncing checks going on when studios were coming to get paid, and you sort of become aware that your manager was dealing with irate studio owners because the third check has bounced from Creation."

Neil Halstead (Slowdive)

"I remember that [McGee] wanted me to wear leather trousers. The thing with McGee was, he wanted to be the puppet master. I think that kind of Malcolm McLaren role was how he saw himself. He wasn't manipulative, just enthusiastic and charismatic. I never wore the leather pants. McGee was always about image. His thing about videos was it would make girls want to fuck you and boys want to be you. He was quite '60s in his attitude. Oasis was his dream band, the dream ticket. He always wanted to make classic pop records, not art records."

END OF AN ERA

"Just about the only thing happening in British indie music last year was a rash of blurry, neo-psychedelic bands," wrote Simon Reynolds in *The Observer* in February of 1992. But just as quickly, shoegaze fell out of favor, derided for being wimpy, fey, and passé. By the mid-'90s, many of the bands had broken up.

Stephen Patman (Chapterhouse)

"There were a lot of professional journalists looking for the new big thing all the time and desperately putting their money on things, and if it didn't pay off (i.e. going to the charts), they dropped it like a hot coal. A lot of those comments about class were coming

from posh journalists that went to private school. And the idea that good music only comes from working-class people is absolute bollocks."

Miki Berenyi (Lush)

"Shoegazing was generally seen as introverted, sensitive, and possibly a bit intellectual. Virtually every band had a woman in it who wasn't required to get her tits out. This does not sit particularly well with the music press, which is mostly run by men who actually are rather weedy and un-masculine, but who like to imagine themselves as rebellious bad boys who do nothing but drink, take drugs, and fuck beautiful, vacuous girls. Shoegazing didn't really fulfill that particular fantasy!"

Neil Halstead (Slowdive)

"When Nirvana came along and grunge came over, it kind of kicked shoegaze out of the water. Oddly enough, a lot of the bands had similar roots to bands we were into."



ABOVE: LUSH'S EMMA ANDERSON; BELOW: CHAPTERHOUSE; RIGHT: RIDE.



BACK FOR MORE

With overt shoegaze influences showing up in the work of popular acts like Serena-Maneesh, M83, and Ulrich Schnauss, some proclaim a revival is occurring. Two current club nights in England, Club AC30 and Sonic Cathedral, focus on shoegaze and have even spun off tours and record labels.

Ulrich Schnauss

"It's not a completely revivalist sort of thing. It's people who grew up with that music, but also a lot of other things, and they're trying to mix these types of music together into something interesting and new."

Yuki Chikudate (Asobi Seksu singer)

"Honestly, we really weren't aware of this [new shoegaze scene] until other journalists brought this up to us. We were in such a bubble in NYC. When we started, in 2003, nobody was interested—it was passé. We were sort of ignored for a while and were surprised a few years ago when people were saying it's not just us [carrying the shoegaze torch]."

Oliver Ackermann (A Place to Bury Strangers singer/guitarist)

"That wall of sound is what made me excited to play electric guitar. You can plug it in and crank it up and there's almost this chaos where, with the sounds coming out of the amp, it's a mystery, something that's beautiful."

Nathaniel Cramp (founder and promoter, Sonic Cathedral)

"I think it's exciting to see [classic shoegaze] records passing to a place where they're accepted as good records. It's sort of a vindication after defending it for years."

Andy Sherriff (Chapterhouse)

"In a way, [shoegaze] seems to have more interest than Brit-pop. It seems to have a longevity to it. It's sort of the revenge of the shoegazers, isn't it?"



THE BAND PLAYED ON: MORE INFO ON THE FACES BEHIND THE FLANGERS.

Miki Berenyi was the frontwoman of Lush, who formed in 1988 and signed to 4AD (Cocteau Twins' Robin Guthrie helped produce the band's debut, *Spooky*). Lush was known for their ethereal melodies and obscured lyrics, though they later moved towards more straightforward power-pop. Lush split following the suicide of drummer Chris Acland in 1995. Berenyi currently works as a magazine editor.

Adam Franklin is the guitarist and singer of Oxford space rockers Swervedriver, who reunited earlier this year to play Coachella and a subsequent tour. Franklin recently recorded an album with Interpol guitarist Sam Fogarino (under the name Magnetic Morning).

Brad Laner was a member of Savage Republic, Electric Company, and the guitarist for Medicine, the only American act to sign with Creation Records. The L.A. resident's recent projects include a solo album of home recordings, *Neighbor Singing* (Hometapes), and scoring the shoegaze documentary *Beautiful Noise*.

Andy Sherriff and **Stephen Patman**, who currently do sound design for movies and television, are two of the four Reading lads who formed dance-oriented shoegaze group Chapterhouse in 1987. Chapterhouse reunited to perform with Ulrich Schnauss at the Truck Festival last July.

Neil Halstead, along with Rachel Goswell, was one of the founding members of Slowdive. The band's soothing, swirling, delay-filled sound is at its finest on the albums *Just for a Day* and *Souvlaki*. After Slowdive disbanded in 1995, Halstead, Goswell, and others formed the similarly melancholy Mojave 3. Halstead, an avid surfer, released his second solo album, *Oh! Mighty Engine*, on Brushfire Records last July.

Eric Green is a writer and first-time film director. His documentary *Beautiful Noise* examines shoegaze bands in a wider musical context. His conversations with Alan McGee and Kevin Shields during the film are not to be missed.

Ulrich Schnauss grew up in Kiel, Germany, where he heard shoegaze upon tuning into the radio stations of British troops stationed nearby. The genre heavily influenced his trilogy of emotional electronic albums: *Far Away Trains Passing By*, *A Strangely Isolated Place*, and *Goodbye*. A former drum & bass producer, Schnauss recently penned the liner notes to a reissue of Chapterhouse's *Blood Music*.

Mark Gardener was the singer and guitarist of Ride, widely touted as one of the best live bands of the era. He and bandmate Andy Bell (now in Oasis) created a wall of distortion and sharp melodies best heard on 1992's chart-topping eight-minute single "Leave Them All Behind." Ride split in 1995, and Gardener moved to France, eventually resurfacing with a solo album, 2005's *These Beautiful Ghosts*.

Oliver Ackermann is the frontman for insanely loud New York-based band A Place to Bury Strangers and runs Death by Audio, a company that builds effects

pedals for the likes of My Bloody Valentine and Nine Inch Nails. Ackermann has been electrocuted a few times.

Yuki Chikudate is the frontwoman of the New York band Asobi Seksu. The group recently finished recording a follow-up to its 2006 album, *Citrus*, during which Chikudate took the occasional nap and cookie break. She interviewed Neil Halstead in 2006 for *XLR8R*.

Nathaniel Cramp is the founder and organizer of the shoegaze-focused record club night Sonic Cathedral, which began October 2004 at the venue Legion in East London. On December 11, the Sonic Cathedral record label will release a new vinyl single from Ride's Mark Gardener, with an Ulrich Schnauss remix.

To read Yuki Chikudate's interview with Neil Halstead, and to download our shoegaze podcast, visit XLR8R.com/123extras.



Dani e rina

PHOTOGRAPHY & ART DIRECTION: [GIULIA MAZZA](#)
STYLING & MAKE-UP [ALESSIA SICARI](#)
MODEL: [MARGHERITA STAGLIANO](#)

DRESS BY MICHAEL KLEIN, LEGGINGS BY DIANE VON FURSTENBERG, BELT BY MANOUSH, SHOES BY YICINI



LAVENDER DRESS BY SEE BY CHLOE, BLUE MESH VEST BY CYBERG WEAR, CARDIGAN BY NINA, STYLIST'S OWN TIGHTS



DRESS BY ROBERTO CAVALLI, FAUX FUR JACKET BY VERSACE JEANS COUTURE, STYLIST'S OWN TIGHTS,
SHOES BY LE SILLA, BELT BY BLUMARINE, HANDWARMERS BY ARMANI JEANS, LUGGAGE BY DOLCE & GABBANA



VINTAGE BRA, SHORTS BY BROKE, SHOES BY MARTIN MARGIELA.22, GLOVES BY ALEXANDER MCQUEEN



SWEATER BY KONITATTO, LEOPARD LEGGINGS BY DOLCE & GABBANA, PATTERNED STIRRUP LEGGINGS BY GALLIANO, BELT BY DIESEL, SHOES BY IRREGULAR CHOICE, STYLIST'S OWN NECKLACE AND SCARF

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Deutsche Grammophon/GER/CD



CARL CRAIG PHOTO RIVA SAYEGH



DEPRESSION-
ERA TECHNO?
TWO CLASSICISTS
RECEIVE THE MODERN
MIDAS TOUCH.

A word to the unwise: a collaborative effort of this magnitude by two of techno's most enterprising artists is a major cause célèbre, a true milestone event. Few have reached as far and achieved as much as have Carl Craig and Moritz von Oswald, each one a cornerstone of electronic-music innovation over the last two decades. Longevity is a premium not often associated with club culture, where unforgiving (and often stupid) cyclical trends and dangerous trap doors of a more personal nature are the standard. But Detroit-based Craig and Berlin-based von Oswald have kept the techno torch burning by alternately expanding and reducing the basic template, broadening the palate and seasoning it with new tones and textures, adding elements of dub, jazz, house, progressive rock, and classical composition to essentially build a brave new world of sound.

This ambitious, seamless, 64-minute reinterpretation of the fluid sonic impressionism of Maurice Ravel and the music of 19th-century Russian classicist Modest Mussorgsky (the most famous intersection of the talents of the two men came on Ravel's 1922 arrangement of Mussorgsky's *Pictures at an Exhibition*) blends complex historical works into a danceable three-act instrumental drama. "Bolero" is indeed represented here, as are Ravel's "Rapsodie Espagnola" and Mussorgsky's "Bilder einer Ausstellung." (The source material for all three is a recording by the Berlin Philharmonic in 1987.)

It's interesting to note that it was recently reported that Ravel may have been in the early stages of frontotemporal dementia when he composed the piece, which some say could account for its repetitive nature. Well, *ahem*, stand down Juan Atkins: We might have a new unwitting godfather of techno, a mad French genius who began creating sick, hypnotic drum

patterns as early as 1928.

Craig and von Oswald's undertaking begins like a ride on the wings of angels, with somber cathedral organs and a blending of what sounds like bassoons, clarinets, oboes, and trumpets delicately treated with electronic effects all leading the charge. Aided by the light patter of a marching drumbeat, this celestial introduction goes on for a gorgeous 20 minutes or so before the mood darkens, helped by a flutter of synthesizers, resonators, and light dub treatments. While still containing echoes of Ravel and Mussorgsky, Craig and von Oswald begin to push the content until it starts to sound a lot like Chicago acid, an early inspiration for both artists. It's a pivotal moment in the piece. Either you take the leap and go along for the ride or you get off here. More pleasures await if you stick it out.

About halfway through, an ambient wobble works its way down into the mix, hovers over the klang for a few moments, then takes center stage as the beats recede. It's the loveliest break of all, a 10-minute interlude that anticipates the last act. Beats roll back in, as do the horns, and strings appear and begin a final ascent. Digital effects are subtle but still apparent, never denying the presence of the recomposers. They make their mark once again with a deepening bass hum and percussive pressure that recalls von Oswald's Rhythm & Sound project (with fellow dub traveler Mark Ernestus). This is foremost a classical project, confidently rendered by two faithful modernists, who know when to let great music convulse and pulse without unnecessary interference. *Walter Wasacz*



See video of Moritz von Oswald in conversation with Editor Vivian Host at XLR8R.com/123extras.

PIGEON FUNK

The Largest Bird in the History of the Planet...Ever!

Musique Risquée/CAN/CD

Pigeon Funk's Kit Clayton and Sutekh never matured a day since their '01 debut record, a micro-house affair inspired by how pigeons dance. *The Largest Bird* begins with a tune of warped, big-band-jazz blurts and splattered samples of pigeon calls ("Mess Call"), and finally ends up in a kindergarten-polka dance party ("Pom Pom Yom..."). This is digital funk that's obese on kitsch, and completely refreshing in our age of trendy, forgettable minimal techno. Pigeon Funk often balances groove and delirium, best heard in the 8-bit synth riffs and drop-kicked beats of "Brukim Lo" and the cookware clangs that carry the otherwise sleepy R&B ballad "Alma Hueco." Clayton and Sutekh once advanced San Francisco's post-techno scene, and though *The Largest Bird* doesn't break any ground, they still have a fearless messiness that's sorely needed in techno. *Cameron Macdonald*



BETTY BOTOX MMM BETTY!

Endless Flight/JPN/CD

Passed over for the commercially viable remix and obscured by the eddies of dub, the re-edit is the Tantric sex of post-production. It's a perpetual climax, a song with its verse removed and compelling bars drawn out. Its art requires utmost vigilance so as not to chaff with too many strokes. JD Twitch of Glasgow's Optimo, masquerading as Betty Botox, has that discipline: He can inject dissident Krautrock into disco, or get proto-industrial without becoming grating. Here he compiles nine spliced and splayed obscurities previously only on limited-edition 12-inch. Once lost sides by The Jellies, Love of Life Orchestra, Severed Heads, Pankow, The Residents, Hawkwind, and Flying Rhythms make a case for getting into branching out. *Tony Ware*

BLACK MILK TRONIC

Fat Beats/US/CD

It's been a good year for Midwest hip-hop, and a better year for Detroit beatsmith Black Milk. He follows his recent contributions to eLZhi's *The Preface* with his third full-length, *Tronic*. While *Tronic* still possesses that signature Motor City sound, Milk adopts more live instrumentation and even steps up his rhyme game. *Tronic* may not leave listeners with a long list of quotables, but Black Milk proves he's more than just a producer, holding his own alongside heavyweights Pharoahe Monch, Royce Da 5'9", and Sean Price on "The Matrix." Lyrically, he displays a boastful swagger, but his best work is behind the board, crafting pieces that range from futuristic to orchestral and push himself—and the genre—forward. *Zoneil Maharaj*

MATTHEW DEAR BODY LANGUAGE VOL. 7

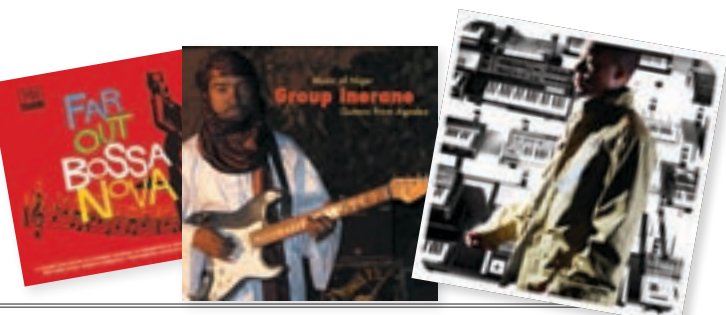
Get Physical/GER/CD

Immune to trends and serving only the hypnotic pulse, Matthew Dear takes command of the *Body Language* series and pilots it directly into the all-consuming heart of current house and techno. Dear's selections take both *Body* and *Language* literally; he supplies an hour of rounded beats to quicken the pulse, but lets tracks like Diz's "No Way"—with its echoed fragments of multiple languages, spoken and sung—spill into the mix to tickle the mind. Other sensations creep in, like Kid Sublime's summer scenes and Soulphiction's driving "Traffic Lights," but most of this corporeal sorcery comes strictly from house's dancefloor laboratory. *Rob Geary*

DUB COLOSSUS A TOWN CALLED ADDIS

Real World/US/CD

Recorded in Ethiopia's capital with native musicians, *A Town Called Addis* connects Ethio-jazz/funk with dub elements. It's a fairly unique, yet surprisingly natural combination. The result is both one of the best dub albums and one of the best world music releases of the year. Incorporating traditional Abyssinian melodies, vocals, and instruments with reggae basslines, echoing grooves, and spacey rinses, Nick Page (a.k.a. Dub Colossus) not only updates the *Ethiopianiques* template, but makes dub music seem even more spiritual and organic than ever. There's a lot of subtle, vibe-y stuff going on in every song—repeat listens can be somewhat akin to a religious experience—making *A Town Called Addis* as close to sacred dub music as it gets. *Eric K. Arnold*



DUB SPECIALIST

DUB

Heartbeat/US/CD

One of Studio One founder Coxsoné Dodd's aliases was the "dub specialist," and this 18-track jaunt through classic riddims shows why. Though Dodd's mixing style wasn't nearly as upsetting as Lee "Scratch" Perry's, nor as majestic as King Tubby's, it's impossible to argue with these rinsed-out versions of stellar tracks by Cornell Campbell, Alton Ellis, The Heptones, Jackie Mittoo, The Soul Vendors, and The Lyrics—they're all strictly foundational. Studio One is still the cornerstone of reggae to this day, and for authentic, old-school echo-chamber business, you can't beat *Dub Specialist*. *Eric K. Arnold*

FAR OUT BOSSA NOVA

Far Out/UK/CD

To celebrate Brazilian bossa nova's half-century mark, Far Out has pulled from its massive catalog to showcase some of this predominantly acoustic tradition's finest moments. The focus has always been on light, airy rhythms, simple but powerful guitar strums, and inspired vocal performances. Far Out has found great examples, especially in Clara Moreno's "Meu Samba Torto," which features the excellent guitar work of Celso Fonseca. Clara's mother Joyce, an innovator in the field with over four decades of performing experience, contributes the piano-soaked "Rio Bahia." Another exemplar moment is Arthur Verocai's beautiful "Vilhos"; he focuses on simplicity for maximum effect—what's made bossa nova so universally appealing all these years. *Derek Beres*

GROUP INERANE GUITARS FROM AGADEZ

Sublime Frequencies/US/CD

Sublime Frequencies co-founder Hisham Mayet travels like a tramp, carrying his bag of recording equipment on hitched rides and charter buses across Africa, Asia, and the Middle East. Out of the Saharan Desert, he's brought back *Guitars From Agadez*, 10 tracks of mind-bending guitar rock by Group Inerane. Bibi Ahmed's cyclical, psychedelic riffs are mesmerizing enough, but the group female vocals work like a prism refocusing a spectrum of sonic colors. These shrill howls and modulated chants float around the steady rhythms of surf rock and psych-blues. Above all, though, this record begs the question—when and how do we get to hear Group Inerane again? *Wyatt Williams*



HATCHBACK COLORS OF THE SUN

Lo/UK/CD

The cosmic-disco revival continues to bloom, and *Colors of the Sun* adds another beautiful petal to the vividly hued flower. The project of producer Samuel Milton Grawe and guitarist Dan Judd, Hatchback grooves metronomically as if punk never happened. *Colors* luxuriates in billows of Vangelis synth fantasias and Tangerine Dream arpeggios while leisurely percolating over pastoral Autobahns. Besides these elements, Hatchback crafts sumptuous melodies that flirt with yacht-funk cheesiness, but ultimately fill you with tranquility. While "Everything Is Neu" telegraphs its reverent, revved-up homage to the Krautrock pioneers, much of *Colors* triggers memories of '90s chillmeisters Ultramarine. Near the end, the disc dims slightly, but overall, it's the sort of halcyon reverie that makes you want to dance—horizontally. *Dave Segal*

EZEKIEL HONIG SURFACES OF A BROKEN MARCHING BAND

Anticipate/US/CD

Ezekiel Honig's second full-length solo release on his own Anticipate imprint is more confident, accomplished, and, best of all, darker and sadder than 2003's melancholy ambient techno dub *Technology Is Lonely*. Honig sets the mood just right on the monochromatic "Porchside Prologue," then bounces into a murky shuffle on both "Broken Marching Band" and "A Brief Visual Pattern." On each track, he uses field recordings and studio effects, a progression of ascending synth chords and a surprisingly robust bassline to create strangely solemn narratives that leave you believing—like in a great film by Hitchcock or Lynch—that there are fewer things more compelling than mysteries contained in the human heart. *Walter Wasacz*

ILLER SESSIONS

Bomb Hip-Hop/US/CD

Seattle's Iller clothing and San Francisco's Bomb Hip-Hop imprint unite here for a compilation centered around good old-fashioned beats and rhymes. While there's no blatant concept to this disc, the true-school sound reigns supreme. The consistency can be attributed to the frequent production of Bean One (Luckyiam, Jurassic 5, Supernatural) and an assembly of "keep it true" acts, which includes golden-era greats (Black Sheep, Large Professor) and a few new-school MCs (Ra Scion, TruFam) as well. Bean One and Company occasionally throw a curve ball, like on Dyme Def's hyphy-flavored single "Rebel2TheGrain," but those looking for next-level material might want to keep searching. *Max Herman*

JAKE ONE WHITE VAN MUSIC

Rhymesayers/US/CD

Even if you've never heard of Jake One, the guest list on the Seattle producer's debut LP is enough to get your attention. *White Van Music* features underground A-listers MF DOOM, Little Brother, and eLZhi alongside mainstream second-stringers like Young Buck and Freeway. Jake crafts beats that compliment his partners well. The album's highlight—two DOOM tracks—could almost be lost Madvillain or DangerDoom joints, but Jake lends his hardest beat to M.O.P. for "Gangsta Boy." Even the unlikely pairings of Brother Ali and Freeway on "The Truth," and Slug and Posdnous on "Oh Really," produce positive results. But Young Buck's and Keak Da Sneak's tracks could've been left out. *Zoneil Maharaj*

LEE JONES ELECTRONIC FRANK

Aus/GER/CD

Lee Jones is one third of Berlin-based collective MyMy, whose *Songs for the Gentle* was one of the most beguiling long-players of 2006. While that album featured horses on the cover, *Electronic Frank* is adorned with a zebra; Jones' debut solo album could well be seen as a similar genetic mutation. Though Jones apparently relocated to the German capital for love not music, *Electronic Frank* plays, in part, like a (relatively restrained) paean to his adopted hometown and the club culture he discovered there. This is most explicit on standout track "MDMAzing," which makes reference to deep house and techno but is littered with all manner of samples (cocktail piano, strings, elephants). All good stuff, albeit not quite up there with MyMy's output. *David Hemingway*



DJ DESIGN

Jetlag

Look/US/CD

DJ Design's discography is modest compared to his prolific Cali peers like Madlib, yet he remains one of the most underrated producers from the Left Coast. From his beat work for his own group Foreign Legion to NYC's AG, Design's productions have always hit hard while rarely sounding redundant. On his debut LP, *Jetlag*, Design finally gets the chance to let his multihued production shine. Relying much more on synths than samples now, he still cooks up some of the most melodious loops around, as heard on the B Lloyd-assisted "All a Dream." And, as he proves repeatedly, he can customize tracks remarkably well (check the menacing "Ferocious" featuring Guilty Simpson). His solo work here, like the bugged-out electro track "Gates of Steel," may not mesh perfectly with the rest of the album, but it sure is a testament to Design's sonic audacity. *Max Herman*

KID SISTER DREAM DATE

Downtown/US/CD

Don't hate—appreciate Kid Sister's skills. Uber-hipster associations aside, this girl can rap, and she credibly represents Chicago with her double-time flows and Twista-like drawl. Unfortunately—blame it on her cool friends—her gimmicky concepts can be hard to swallow in a concentrated dose like the 14-track *Dream Date*. Yes, the A-Trak-produced, Kanye West-aided "Pro Nails," with its non-sexual bragadocio, is a welcome addition to lady rap. But the self-explanatory "Family Reunion" and the nostalgic "Beeper" are beyond cheeky—they're cheesy. Tracks like these might emanate from the right place, but they feel tailor-made for audiences who listen to hip-hop for ironic purposes. And that's precisely what older rap heads find so off-putting about the new hipster-rap generation. *Jesse Serwer*

LEMONADE LEMONADE

True Panther Sounds/US/CD

Song titles say it all on Lemonade's eponymous debut. "Big Weekend" and "Blissout" are armed with the populist approach that you'd expect—a psychedelic hodgepodge of samples, wonky synths, and tumbling percussion for the indie-kid dance set. One can almost envision throngs of neon sneakers and flipped-up baseball caps when "Nasifon" launches into its clap-along house-flavored romp, or when "Real Slime" wobbly dub influences are nearly cancelled out by ludicrous lyrics. Fittingly, the West Coast party is crashed during its final comedown moments. "Unreal" may feel like this zany trio has run out of uppers, but the loads of delay on the vocals and absolutely huge-sounding bass stabs make it seem as if the shit's just about to go off. *Dominic Umile*

LOS UPDATES FIRST IF YOU PLEASE

Cadenza/SWI/CD

Cadenza's rep for brainy, unconventional techno gets up-ended by *First If You Please*. Love-centric lyrics delivered with faux earnestness in broken English lend this Chilean duo's tracks a Yello-ing/ Señor Coconut-y veneer of hilarity. Meanwhile, the music by Los Updates' Jorge González and Loreto Otero mirrors their verbal eccentricities. (This odd levity didn't stop Luciano and Villalobos from putting remixed tracks from *First* on their *Fabric* mixes.) The beats often stutter and halt, forming a clubfooted funk that's far from minimal's precision and regularity. The textures—heavy on jet-engine

DAVE AJU

Open Wide

Circus Company/FRA/CD

Well, this should seriously confound "computer music" naysayers for years to come—a dance record, what you'd peg as "electronic," composed entirely of sounds from Dave Aju's mouth. Listening, you won't believe it (I didn't)—this is masterful by any standards, a broad-genre black hole that sucks in the most fuckable deep Chicago house ("First Love"); cheek-popping, bumpity hip-hop ("Bump"); busy, funky tech-house ("Crazy Place"); and other consistently warm, bouncy tracks that sit imperfectly in the "house music" slot (and give new meaning to the term "vocal house"). The record is so solid that even though Aju (né Marc Barritte) uses his mouth as the sole sound source, it almost seems an unnecessary gimmick. You might ask, *why bother?* For starters, because he can, and because dance music has a right to sound this human every now and again. *Michael Byrne*



roars-warp into funhouse distortion, while the processed vocals tweak funnybones. Looks like the underground dance scene finally has its own Flight of the Conchords. *Dave Segal*

LUOMO CONVIVAL

Huume/FIN/CD

If *Convival* were a dinner party, prolific producer Sasu Ripatti (a.k.a. Vladislav Delay) prepared by setting the china, polishing the silver, and inviting the glitterati. His fourth, fabulous album refines his exacting style while simultaneously breaking the steely micro mold of 2006's *Paper Tigers*. Here, frequent vocalist Johanna Iivanainen gossips in the corner with Cassy, while Robert Owens and Scissor Sisters' Jake Shears toast to the absurdity of human emotion. Sue Cie raps, and the increasingly dramatic Sascha Ring (a.k.a. Apparat) invokes Depeche Mode (on the only track that doesn't sound like a Ripatti creation). Luomo's signature underwater-dub veneer is still there, strengthened by the eccentricities of his glamorous guests. *Rachel Shimp*

MIWON A TO B

City Centre Offices/GER/CD

Driven by quivering, crisp beats, Miwon's *A to B* is a bright record that finds the German producer matching his affinity for techno with ornamental, casually evolving melodic pop. The interplay of programmed taps and birdsong at the forefront of *A to B* speaks well to his angle: This is chipper fare, with artful crescendos bursting reliably after a surplus of layered build-ups. Both "Matchbox" and "Round and Round" play host to a great deal of rustling background clatter at the onset, before overtly glassy tones à la Kaito or Ulrich Schnauss filter in overtop. Miwon exhibits a too-rare acumen with atmospheric nuances, but he tempers it mindfully, steering clear of the trance pop that lingers around the bend. *Dominic Umile*

MOGWAI THE HAWK IS HOWLING

Matador/US/CD

A decade after their earth-shattering debut, Mogwai remain victims of high expectations. *Young Team* was a game-changer in 1997, and fans have yet to stop clamoring for another "Like Herod." But instead of straining to break their own rules, Mogwai has quietly gone on to perfect them. *The Hawk is Howling*, Mogwai's sixth LP and their first with no vocals, is the band's most generous offering in years—essentially 2006's *Mr. Beast* with room to breathe. Unlike most of their post-rock peers, Mogwai avoids obvious moods, never leaning too heavily toward apocalyptic (Godspeed You! Black Emperor) or transcendent (Explosions in the Sky). The interplay gives a song like "Local Authority"—maybe the loveliest thing Mogwai has committed to tape—a tense, unsettling beauty. *John S.W. MacDonald*

NUSPIRIT HELSINKI OUR FAVORITE THINGS

Backdrop/UK/CD

Though it's been a while since we've heard from this collaboration between Finnish DJs and producers, it's exciting to see them return, even if not with



their own music. *Our Favorite Things* is a handpicked compilation of, well, as the title suggests, songs they really like. And if you are a fan of the jazz undertones in their tasteful electronic hybrids, chances are you'll appreciate these 10 tracks. The opening marimba-and-vibraphone pairing of Aisha Duo on "Beneath an Evening Sky" is jaw-droppingly gorgeous. Things never really pick up after that, but rather maintain a serene, reflective pace—even Nuspirit's electro-dub remix of Korpi Ensemble's "A Moment of Love," with its *bandoneón* and midtempo rhythm, is meditative. *Derek Beres*

PAS CHIC CHIC AU CONTRAIRE

Semprini/CAN/CD

On first listen, Pas Chic Chic's debut comes off as a lackluster take on vintage Francophone pop—all chirpy organ, martial percussion, and melodramatic tenors—like a poor man's Stereolab. But after these tunes settle in, it's clear that with ex-members of Godspeed You! Black Emperor and Fly Pan Am in tow, Montreal's Pas Chic Chic has no intention of scoring your dinner party. Spooky static hugs every neat, right-angled melody; reverb envelops every bouncy synth. Occasionally, as on "Vous Comprenez Pourquoi," Pas Chic Chic's psychedelic dread bubbles over in a torrent of brittle organ and screaming mellotron. Beating just below *Au Contraire's* smooth skin, is a wild, noisy heart. *John S.W. MacDonald*

VARIOUS PRODUCTION VERSUS

Various Production/UK/CD

Trolling along the outskirts of dubstep and grime since 2003, Various Production is about as close to a modern-day Omni Trio as anyone else is gonna get. It's not just the jazzy influences, big vocals, and careful distancing from the track-a-week producer grind, either—like Rob Haigh, the Various Production guys are older, wiser, and a little more talented than your average FruityLoops jock. As such, Various pulls some nice tricks on remixes like Foals' "Red Sox," which re-imagines the former math rockers into an odd hybrid of Bloc Party, Burial, and The Cure. And since this is also a *versus* album, young bloods like Zomby turn in fantastically drastic reworks, like giving Various' own "Haters," a dose of bizarre 8-bit bounce. *Brandon Ivers*



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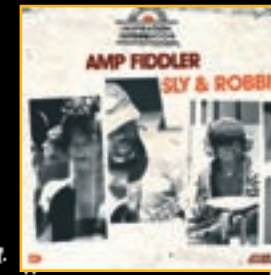
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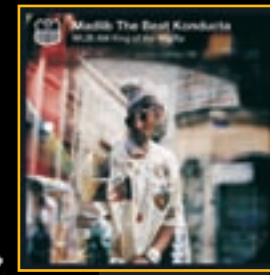
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ASCII DISKO *a Bureaucratic Desire for Revenge*

Out Dec 15th, 2008

ASCII.Disko. *A Bureaucratic Desire for Revenge* is a two-headed beast of an EP, with both tracks set to absolutely slay the world's electronic-oriented clubs: "Black Acid" is nasty, slightly acidic crusher, with a snaking bassline swerving it's way around spiraling, squalling synths and a relentless rhythm, tension building until the track finally collapses out of sheer exhaustion. "H.O.W.L." is a bit more restrained but no less effective, with a grinding sine wave battling rolling percussion; like side A, the track is a real builder. Killer!



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Biatch Corp's first release is a self-assured slab of deep, stripped-down electronics and bumping rhythm. Featuring remixes from Perc and Jussi-Pekka

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Broken Business

By Peter Nicholson

FUTURE JAZZ AND BUSTED BEATS



JOEY NEGRO



BIG HORNS BEE



JAZZANOVA

Sometimes you just gotta skip any pussyfooting around and open things up with a bang. One new 7" is up to the task—*The Big 7*" coming on the always reliable Mukatsuku Records. The a-side, "Vamp Intro (Reprise)," features a raucous blast of funk from **Big Horns Bee**, which teams fruity organ with punchy horns (and an especially ripe trombone solo), while the flip drops "Spiral Waltz" from **Big Bang**, which starts out all contemplative keys and upright bass before kicking into hyperdrive with rollicking congas and kit work that just barely keeps pace with a rip-roaring piano riff. Pure jazz-dance madness!

Since I've ventured into Japanese-related territory, need to give a quick nod to a solid dose of jazz-house, the Especial 10th Anniversary EP, **Jose Carretas ft. Dani's** "Never Let Me Down." It's a **Restless Soul** production and, typical for them, über-classy four-on-the-floor action with Dani's raw sugar vocals riding a smooth Rhodes melody. Especial also comes correct with a sampler EP from the soon-to-come **Reel People** album, and guess who tops the lot? **4Hero** work their magic on "Outta Love," which features none other than U.K. soul legend **Omar** rocking a crisp bossa beat.

And, as long as I'm on an FoT kick, how about **Randolph's** latest, featuring a syrupy remix by **Isoul8**, with a deliberate, deadly 115 bpm. And, for that matter, another must-have on the house end of the spectrum is **Da Lata's** "This is Not Your Job" on good old Papa Records. Top-notch instrumental work, especially by **Mamadou Sarr** on *djembe* and **Diabel Cissokho** who handles vocals and *kora*. Rich 'n' spicy!

Okay, now it's on to the bruk... Tip of the iceberg is **Clyde** with his *Hyper Reality*

sampler on Mantis Recordings. I'm all about the "Million Souls Sold," with its squashed bass, soul claps, and party rap, but "Gedaroom" is damn hot, too, all female rapping and a weird, swoopy sample that sounds a bit like a slowed-down steam whistle.

IG Culture rarely disappoints, and he lives up to his rep with his take on "Turn It Out" by **Joey Negro and the Sunburst Band** on Z Records. Always been a fan of Joey and his seemingly infinite number of guises, and IG gives him a right proper broken funk re-rub, complete with choppy percussion and a dash of vocoder.

Once again, John Kong's Do Right! label brings us the funky goodness, this time with **Soul Jazz Orchestra**. "Parasite" was a fave on Gilles' show and it's still hot, with thick horns and a chunky beat, while the flip on this 7" comes a bit more rootsy, with the guitars more up front.

Over in the "unclassifiable" section, you'll find the newest serving from Bastard Jazz, the *Bhuna Beats* EP. Label boss **DJ DRM** steps up and delivers four tracks of dubby, breaky, even bhangra-y goodness, with my favorite being "Blinger On," a ska-tastic, trumpet-driven stepper that will get your knees up high.

Gonna close things out this month with the glory that is **Jazzanova**. Going live, "Let Me Show Ya" is absolutely huge, featuring Randolph (there he is again!) on vocals and breathtaking strings. I like the original, but if you want a remix, how about **Henrik Schwarz**? Somehow he manages to keep the soul vibe turned all the way up to 11 while injecting some space disco. It's madness... and absolutely necessary listening.



En Tu Casa

By Nick Chacona

HOUSEKEEPING: FROM TECH AND MINIMAL TO DEEP AND TRADITIONAL



MYMY



HOLGER ZILSKE



JULIA BIEL PHOTO ALEXANDRA BONE

Over the past few years, it's clear that **Quentin Harris** has become one of the preeminent forces on the NY house scene. Migrating to the Big Apple a number of years back from Detroit, Harris had ambitions to break into the hip-hop world but found an early home on Spacekat Records, which released his seminal *Episodes* EP and also his initial collaboration with **Cordell McClary**, "Travelling." In 2008, Harris has continued full-force, putting out a slew of singles, internationally re-releasing his first full-length, *No Politics* (Strictly Rhythm), and honorably curating the latest installment of King Street's *Mix the Vibe* series. All the while, Q has also developed quite a rep for some of the most stunning underground remixes on labels such as Restricted Access and his own Half Rabbit imprint. Late this fall, he takes on **Coldplay** for a mix of "God Put a Smile on Your Face," a bouncy, energetic rendition that sounds as if he kept the original intact and glued the bass and drum section right on top.

Tarantic Records has decided to shake things up a bit with a single sampler of diverse tracks from the upcoming *Pinstripe Late Night* album by San Francisco-based **BradElectro**, which draws on broken beat, deep house, and funk. "Weekend Warrior" leads things off in an Afro-fueled groove that could almost be the backing track to an old Talking Heads joint. "Cool Jets" flies into more familiar electronic territory with an ambient intro giving way to a jazzy breakbeat. "Freaky Friday" comes in two versions: the playful house original and a more driving club version from San Jose's **Gabriel Black**, known for his releases on **Q-Burns'** Eight Track Recordings and Tangible.

Coming off their fifth anniversary, Buzzin Fly shows no signs of slowing the pace. Following the massive tech crossover

tune "Chiho," by **Spencer Parker** (with an equally smashing remix by **Jerome Sydenham**), the Fly returns with the first single in three years from label boss **Ben Watt** (and **Julia Biel**) entitled "Guinea Pig." Tense, oscillating synths, syncopated cross-sticks, sampled be-bop pianos, and a super-fat bass lay out the mood, which is built and stretched in a series of peaks and breaks. Biel's beautiful vocal delivers typically astute Watt lyrics. This will be a versatile weapon for months to come as it's being played by everyone from **Francois K** to **Claude VonStroke** to **Hernan Cattaneo**.

In the ever-growing world of re-edit labels, the Wurst imprint has become a force to be reckoned with. On the heels of **Eamon Harkin's** debut for the label come the **Runaway** boys with their sophomore Wurst effort. On the a-side, "Use Me" is less of an edit and more of a proper remix of sorts, in which Marcos and Jacques warp sections of an early-'90s pop-house hit and then construct an entirely new groove around it, creating one of the most darkly emotive party tunes of the year. On the flip, "Just Got Paid" is closer to the typical disco-edit fare, but properly juiced for the maximum effect.

Fans of the Frankfurt-based Playhouse imprint will be pleased to know that the sixth installment of the label's, uh, famed *Famous When Dead* compilation series will be rereleased by the end of the year. Playhouse has been cultivating its universal, über-modern, and timeless house sound for 15 years. *FWD 6* is a double-CD, with tunes culled from the usual Playhouse suspects (**Losoul**, **MyMy**, **Holger Zilske**) and one of my fave slo-house tunes of the year, **Todd Terje's** Türkatech Rework of **Simon Baker's** "Plastik." Check it!



Future Jazz Guest Reviews: Simbad

When multi-instrumentalist, DJ, and producer Simbad isn't busy trotting the globe spinning his blend of broken beat, hip-hop, deep house, dubstep, and disco, the Frenchman who currently calls East London home manages to produce everything from dancehall to big-band jazz in his various collaborations (such as Izmabad, TettoryBad, Marathon Men, Mowgly, Twitch, Beatkeepers, Heal, Dreadpoet, Loose Ensemble, and Les Barons). In early 2008 he released a solo album, *Supersonic Revelation*, on Raw Fusion, and has a follow-up, *Supercosmic Revolution*, planned for spring 2009 (as well as his usual slew of 12-inches on deck). And when he's not recording and producing, he's holding down the internet radio waves on ministryofsound.com every second Saturday, or the dancefloor at his *Je Ne Sais Quoi* monthly at Vibe Bar in East London. Here's a quick taste of what you might catch him playing. *Justin Maxson* myspace.com/djsimbad

ATJAZZ FEAT. DAWNE B "PARALLELS"

Mantis/UK/12

A fresh single release taken from Atjazz's new album (which is truly beautiful) on his own Mantis Recordings, featuring dope remixes by Jazzanova (the Berlin boyz deliver on this one!) and deep-house don Charles Webster. Webster twists his synths and carries the track toward more electronic territory. The original is brilliant as well, and Dawne B's warm vocals sit just right. We need more 12s of this quality. *Simbad*

JOY JONES

"THE JOY" B/W "THIS TOO SHALL PASS"

Record Breakin'/US/12

The lovely singer Joy Jones gets produced and remixed by a few cats from the scene. While the ill Daru Jones and Lil' Dave from Philly keep it downtempo with the flavor, it's Daz-I-Kue's bruk remix that I've been rinsin'—this one is a monster broken soul tune! *Simbad*

BUSY PEOPLE

"CHANGE YOUR WAYS EP"

Sunshine Enterprises/AUS/12

Vienna-based label Sunshine Enterprises provides us with a great lil' 12 here, the second single off Busy People's *Never Too Busy* album. I adore Just 1's (a.k.a. Atlanta singer/producer Justin Chapman) remix of "Get Out" (featuring his own vocals), where he gives it a deep, broken, soulful, raw vibe. It sounds absolutely huge on a loud soundsystem. On the flip, you've got the original "Change Your Way" and "Someday," which get remixed by Isoul8 for some good electronic, old-school 4/4 vibes. *Simbad*

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Available: 11.11.08

Celebrated breakbeat pioneers Stanton Warriors have remained unrivalled in their genre for more than a decade. This long awaited third installment in their seminal "Stanton Sessions" delivers an unsurpassed mix for the electro & breakbeat aficionado alike.



Metro Area
fabric 43
Available: 11.25.08

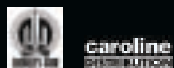
Morgan Geist and Dashan Jesrani, the infectious New Jersey / N.Y duo who brought us the seminal club classic 'Muria', create on fabric 43 the perfect party mix, blending seamlessly 80's Funk Disco gems such as Barbara Norris 'It's Heavy' & Mascara's fantastically narrated bilingual hit "Baja" through to early House classic with Plez 'Can't Stop' and Chez & Ron Trent's 'Morning Factory' soulful techno epic.



Switch And Sinden
Present Get Familiar Mixed by Sinden FABRICLIVE 43
Available: 1.13.09

On FABRICLIVE 43, the unstoppable DJ/producer Sinden steps up to represent Get Familiar, his bimonthly FABRICLIVE club residency with Dave 'Switch' Taylor. A thumping representation of the unconventional programming Switch & Sinden bring to each club night, with FABRICLIVE 43 Sinden merges the freshest sounds in bass-heavy dubland: dancehall, grime, bassline, ghetto-tech, dubstep, his signature skewed slant on house music, and everything in between that bangs.

Forthcoming: John Tejada, Commix, A-Trak



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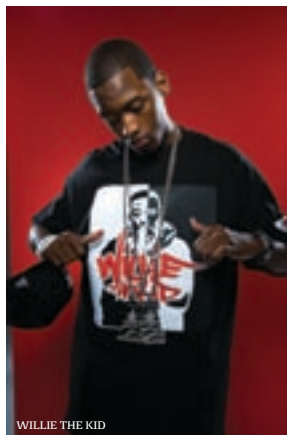
COLUMNS



Read the Label

By Jesse "Orosco" Serwer

HIP-HOP MIXTAPES, WHITE LABELS, AND SHIT



WILLIE THE KID



SID ROAMS

The holidays are a time for catching up with old friends and that's what this month's column is about-visits from Read the Label favorites and long-M.I.A. MCs you forgot you loved.

First up is **Prodigy**, who's having a terrific year for someone who's been incarcerated since the spring. On the heels of his highly recommended *H.N.I.C. Pt. 2*, Infamous P has hooked up with pals **Big Twinz** (the gravel-throated half of **Infamous Mobb**) and **Un Pacino** for *Product of the '80s*, a mixtape-y LP on Brooklyn's Dirt Class label. Lyrically, the album conjures the nightmarish vibe of crack-era NYC but it's the crafty, synth-funk-sampling beats by **Sid Roams** (which is actually two guys named **Joey Chavez** and **Bravo**) that really tap into the energy of the time.

Speaking of Queensbridge rappers, remember **Imam Thug?** Best known for his cameo appearance on CNN's "Driver's Seat" and assorted Tragedy Khadafi projects, the Muslim MC has re-emerged on British producer **ED209**'s "Karma 360" (Voodoo Rhythm Devils). Ed's minimal, piano-based beat sounds like a long-lost Marley Marl cut, and Thug rocks it well in a manner not unlike his old pal Tragedy.

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it evokes Peedi and Beanie Sigel's would-be classic, "Gotta Have It."

"If That's How You Feel," the "I don't dance" anthem from **Z-Ro**'s recent *Crack* LP (Rap-A-Lot/Asylum), is one of my favorite tracks of the year, and, now that the album's exceeded expectations, it may be the second single. Either way, it's got a killer cameo from Screwed Up Click vet **Lil' Keke**, who also recently laced **Rob G.**'s "Road to Success" (Latium Entertainment/Universal) with his wizened wisdom. People are sleeping on H-Town right now...

I wish more folks were up on **Tabi Bonney**. The DC native has landed a string of videos on MTV since emerging with "The Pocket" in '06, but everyone still shrugs when you mention his name. "Duhh," the single from his upcoming *Dope* EP (Organized Rhyme), has a beat like something Roxanne Shante would have rocked over. The thing I love about this guy is the way he leaves all this room around his rhymes, letting his words hang and filling in the spaces with ad libs. It's the kind of shit that makes this sound like the smartest shit in the world: "Saw a rapper that got robbed for his/Now that's what I call off the chain."

Finally, mixtape sensation **Willie the Kid** gets the pseudo-album treatment with *Absolute Greatness* (Asylum/Aphilliates Music Group), a proper label release that's nevertheless branded with DJ Drama's Gangsta Grillz tag. The title may be a little overambitious, but there's some really good tracks here. My pick is "Coog Down," which finds Willie trading lines about favored fashion brands with his older brother (and former Wu affiliate), **La the Darkman**. Family, consumerism... sounds like Christmastime.

COLUMNS



Downbeat Diaspora

By Rico "Superbizzee" Washington

EXPLORING THE BOUNDARIES OF DRUM & BASS.



BRITTANY BOSCO



FOREIGN EXCHANGE PHOTO TOBIAS ROSE

Look people, you heard it on the radio. You seen it on the TV show. E to the P! Wha' g'wan, youths! It seems that the season of the EP is at hand! Folks are releasing teasers left and right like there ain't no tomorrow. So it's only right that I cherry-pick the cream of the crop and give you a tasty sample of the sonic smorgasbord!

DC native and former Erykah Badu back-up vocalist **Yahzarah** is back! Following up her 2004 album, *Blackstar*, she's decided to do the damn thang dolo this time with her self-released *The Prelude* EP. Some funky shit here, y'all. Especially the opening cut, "Four Alarm Fire!"

Speaking of DC, experimental soul collective **Op Swamp 81** just debuted with their six-track joint *Peau Noire, Masques Blancs* (*Black Skin, White Masks*). Rich with references to Frantz Fanon and an infamous racially motivated riot in England, this EP ups the ante with dope cuts like "Another Day." Don't sleep!

Anybody who thought the ATL was stuck on some crunktastic playalistic shit better take note. With the new eight-track *Spectrum* EP (The Big Up) from **Brittany Bosco** on shelves, ain't no wonder they call it Hotlanta! Brittany refracts some light fo' that ass on cuts like the extraterrestrial banger "City of Nowhere."

Euro-Nigerian model-turned-singer **In Love** has chosen to introduce herself to the R&B world by paying homage to one of our most treasured songbirds in flight on her three-track EP, *DJ Cam presents In Love: For Minnie Riperton* (Inflamable). Check the Prince-meets-Ready for the World beats on "For Minnie Riperton," dripping with smooth vocals and **DJ Cam**'s mellow production.

Straight outta Berlin, **Jazzanova** is back in the saddle, y'all! As a prequel to the new

album, they're offering up a fresh 12" slab of Northern soul! "Let Me Show You," featuring the chops of Detroit-based vocalist **Paul Randolph**, is as good as it gets! Keep an eye out for their upcoming sophomore joint *Of All the Things* (Verve).

Phonte and **Nicolay** (a.k.a. **Foreign Exchange**) finally reconvene on home turf with *Leave It All Behind* (Imagine Nation/Hall of Justus). Building on that same transcontinental swagger of their critically acclaimed debut, they stay bringin' that heat with folks like **Muhsinah**, **Yahzarah**, and **Darien Brockington** in tow. Oh, and the cover of the **Stevie Wonder** sleeper "If She Breaks Your Heart" is fire!

Under the auspices of Kindred Spirits Records, a group of soulful folks have collaborated once again under the moniker of **Liquid Spirits**. Over the course of their four-track EP, simply titled *Music*, they manage to pay tribute to legendary producer/arranger Charles Stepney, wax poetic with Phonte, and get sexy with the incomparable Leon Ware. If that ain't worth the price of a sammich, I don't know what is!

Solar sista **Georgia Anne Muldrow** has been busy this year! Nevertheless, she's found time to put together an album of her own, devoid of *noms de plume*. *Modular Lovedrums Safari* (ePistrophik Peach Sound) is a funky-ass instrumental excursion. From the sounds of thangs, Georgia is communicating with the spirits of Sun Ra and Alice Coltrane! Certified dope.

I gotta roll, y'all. Catch me on the flipside. Oh, and just a friendly reminder to all those funk-impaired folk out there: clap on the upbeat, drop it on the downbeat!



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After Silence

By Martin De Leon

THE OUTER ORBITS OF ELECTRONIC MUSIC



Bubble Metropolis

By ML Tronik

TECHNO: MINIMAL, BANGING, AND BEYOND



Winter is a bummer, but the sweater weather makes for a good time to listen to dark, warm records. Let the synthesizer be your coat.

Greymachine, the new project of **Jesu's Justin Broadrick**, offers wonderfully evil industrial textures on its upcoming album, *Disconnected* (Avalanche)—it's like Throbbing Gristle beating up Gorgoroth. "Vulture Descends," the first single, is a nine-minute masterpiece of shrieking vocals and ass-kicking drums that ends in two minutes of beautifully satanic synths.

Kid606 might not be evil, but his perverse techno is enough for me. *Die Soundboy Die* (Tigerbeat6) damages speakers with electro-dub jams ("You Can't Stop a Stepper"), heartfelt glitches ("Bat Manners"), and splintering avant-techno ("Umbilical Bullets"). Miguel Depedro is back.

ThirtyGhost Records is an Austin-based label that has constantly been putting out great stuff, like Chicago's **Teith** and their terrific *Oak City* EP. **Pelican** member **Trevor de Brauw** started this quartet, whose brainy rock on "Coffee is a Cruel Mistress" finds fuzzy guitars evolving into an 8-bit shoegazer ditty. Teith is a great example of a band that use electronics so effortlessly, it makes you wonder why other bands can't.

But six strings are just fine for Toronto's **Nadja** (**Aidan Baker** and **Leah Buckareff**), and they bring plenty of them on their brilliant split-12" with U.K. doom-core band **Atavist**, *II: Points at Infinity* (Profound Lore). Both groups recorded each song together but the slow, minimal gloom track "Projective Plane" leans towards Nadja's ambience. Hell breaks loose on the gorgeous "Closed Curve" as a pulsing drone loiters above thick,

black-metal riffs, making this an unholy collaboration.

Argentina's **Manu Schaller** also does weird stuff, but with an MPC-3000; he's also the bassist for experimental *cumbia* wizard **Dick el Demasiado**. "Fidel Castro" features a Dilla-esque hip-hop beat with Schaller repeating the Cuban dictator's name while attempting to rap. It's worth stealing from the internet (it's unreleased). Sloppy rhymes are this year's disco-punk. Listen in at myspace.com/manuschaller.

Horror films with live scores should be the next big thing. And Detroit electro-punk duo **ADULT.** is leading the charge, playing a live score to their 40-minute, silent experimental horror opus, *Decampment*. By the time you read this, New York and Los Angeles will have seen the piece performed, but you may be able to get your hands on the limited-edition 7" series that accompanies the film's release, *The Decampment Trilogy* (Ersatz Audio). Visit adultperiod.com to check out a clip.

Ever thought about what a *cumbia* cover of **The Cure**, performed by an all-queer Mexican-and-Argentine group, might sound like? Us neither. But **Kumbia Queers**, four women who use *cumbia* and punk terrifically on *Cumbia Nena* (Discos Horario Invertidos), have. Yes, it's even better than it sounds, especially when the wobbly organ takes over on "Lovesong"—you might even wiggle your toes.

Still cold? Nothing I've heard is warmer than Brooklyn's **U.S. Girls**, the one-woman project of **Megan Remy**. The dope, upcoming *Kankakee Memories* EP (Cherry Burger) is led by the noisy, Telepathe-esque "So Ladder Strong," which makes this one of the best things to keep you moving under those cold covers.

Now live inside that famed Bubble referenced in the title of this column. The past two months here in the city of Detroit have confirmed and also debunked many things I'd only heard about for years. One thing certainly remains true: there is a strange magic about this place that both inspires and wears down its inhabitants. And much of the music that comes out of here remains uncompromising in a way I've yet to see anywhere else.

But enough about that—let's talk about music. **Christian Martin** and I have a running gag about **Fachmann**. It started after the 01 release dropped, and now we're up to 03 (Fachmann Trontrager). We have no idea who this person is, but we like to imagine that he's a lone German dude in his studio banging out these scant, funky tracks, saying in an exaggerated accent, "*Faaach, maaan.*" It's awesome. You should try it.

You should also try to get a copy of **Andreas Jornvil's** *Re:connected 05* (Reconnected), particularly if you've been feeling that whole tribal thing of late. Both tracks are in-depth and somewhat mental journeys, but they shift the ass on the floor with a nice dose of jack. Check "Porta" on the flip.

By the time you read this, history will have been made with election of the United States' first black president. My editor is probably going to cringe at me for pulling a stunt like this but, at this point, I know it's going to happen and I'm willing to put my rep on the line. What's this got to do with **Seuil's** devastating new *Deep Hooks* release on Lomidhigh Organic? Nothing, but I will say this is some seriously psyched-out, deep techno-house, and our new leader does hail from the state where house music was born. And now, it's all his house.

I've reviewed **Jacek Sienkiewicz** a few times here, and it seems like each time the guy gets better and better at what he does. He's never satisfied with establishing a set

sound, which I can respect. On his new 12", "Beacon" (Recognition), he delves even deeper into melding techno and traditional instrumentation, as this track prominently features a mellow sax hook under a pulsating rhythm arrangement. The **Soulpiction** remix on the b-side spreads out a bit and adds some congas for a nice, percussive flair.

Also very enjoyable is **Kate Simko's** latest, "Gamelan" b/w "Margie's Groove" (Spectral Sound). Kate has really stepped it up here, and rather than follow the norm she moves slightly to the left with a lead track that incorporates gamelan percussion and a head-nodding synth stab to keep everything moving. It's like a moonlight beach rave in Indonesia. Feel the heat.

Jon Ludwig brings the hotness with "Transonoir" (Motivbank). This two-cut release features some deft mono-synth machinations. The title track is a dubby soundsystem kind of tune you might play to warm a club night. The b-side, "BigWig," takes words from H.P. Lovecraft's *The Crawling Chaos* and matches it with an ill-ass beat. Secret-weapon status, this.

Seems like every time I turn around, I see a new track from **Tigerstripes**. This remix single, "Hooked" (Liebe Detail), features an unexciting a-side mix from **Guy Gerber**, but **Solomun's** remix on side two has depth. (This is especially true if pitched up +2 or so.)

And finally this month we have the debut release from a new, possibly Detroit-based label, Beyond. I say "possibly" because the only information the single came with was a 313 area-code fax number. In any event the artist featured is **Gonno**, who hails from Japan. "I Don't Need Competition" is an impressive first release; very thoughtful, reverb-laden synth jams, à la '90s Black Dog and Aphex Twin. All four tracks drip with atmosphere and deep beats, so give it a shot.



Techno Guest Reviews: Stefan Goldmann

It's no surprise that a DJ and producer as adventurous as Berliner Stefan Goldmann can hardly sit still. Not only does he twist genres into beautiful messes of danceability and melody, but you'll find him doing all those things in far-flung locales like his current residency in Sofia, Bulgaria. He's put out house and techno singles for all the game's heavy hitters (Classic, Ovum, Perlon, Innervisions, Minus, and the like), but Goldmann currently runs his own Macro label, named after his obscure, now-defunct London radio program. His recent full-length, the two-disc set entitled *The Transitory State*, was three years in the making, and collects the funky techno and house grooves and experimental ambient soundscapes that have come to define him. Here, the all-over-the-place jetsetter gives us his picks for some slammin' tracks on the horizon. *Lulu McAllister* myspace.com/stefangoldmann

REMUTE "ZUENDLI"

Remute/GER/12

A crazy track from Denis Karimani (a.k.a. Remute). The vinyl may just be a single side, but it's worth it. It starts with a driving beat, perfect for any DC10 party, but then there's an upfront noise pattern that feels like someone is trying to saw off part of your head. Big fun! There's also a weird bonus track—finally people are starting to put non-functional stuff on their records again! More of that please. *Stefan Goldmann*

DIGITALINE "TAPADAKA"

Cadenza/GER/12

A wonderfully lush a-side brings the warmth of deep house from a super-fresh minimal-techno outfit. The beat is reduced, but quirky and driving. Great to have stuff with a deep edge that doesn't sound like someone is trying to bring 1988 back. *Stefan Goldmann*

SANTIAGO SALAZAR "SANTUARIO"

Historia y Violencia/US/12

Santiago Salazar has a discography made in heaven, ranging from UR to Los Hermanos to Planet E. But more important is that his sound has been developing really quickly recently and this is another prime example of his ability to create tunes that are as modern as they are deep. "Santuario," with its basic chord figure, will hypnotize any crowd. *Stefan Goldmann*

THE CHEAPERS "WILDERNESS PART 2 EP"

Upon You/GER/12

Upon You regularly puts out stuff that really kicks ass, and this one is no exception. "Fortress" is the one here; great bass action and a slice of dub without sounding like Basic Channel clone No.5472. It also reminds me of one of my all-time favorites, "1984" by Praxis. Not sure if they had this in mind, but it's lovely either way! *Stefan Goldmann*

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Basic Needs

By Kid Kameleon

LOW-END NECESSITIES, FROM RAGGA TO DUBSTEP AND BEYOND



Make Space

By Ross Holland

LEFTFIELD DANCE, DISCO, POST-PUNK, AND EARTHLY WEIRDNESS.



One artist that's been killing it for me lately is **BD1982**. I first heard BD in his Queens days, when three of his remixes appeared on the *Street Bass Anthems* mixtape series. Now he's in Yokohama, and about a year ago he released the on-point *Bigfoot* EP on **Dev79's** Seclusiasis label. It's tight, springy, danceable stuff with a dreamy edge that pays homage to DJ Krush, Wiley, and mid-era Ninja Tune all at once. Now he's got some new dope joints popping around, including the show-stopping "Bluberry Afgani" remix of Berkeley High friends **The Cataracs**, plus a second EP due soon on Seclusiasis. Hit up myspace.com/bd1982 for more.

The two members of **Dokkebi Q** (a.k.a. **Kiki** and **Gorgonn**) actually moved away from Japan and took up residency in London, where they crafted their self-titled eight-track demo/maxi-EP for their own label 3QReq. Dokkebi Q's sound blends Cibo Matto's kookiness and pastiche aesthetics with the breakcore, dub, and hip-hop elements that have influenced The Bug (who introduced me to their sound). The whole release is pure quality.

Japanese in name only is the prolific duo **Akira Kiteshi**. Edinburgh's answer to the Glasgow revolution, the team of **Whys** and **Hiz** melds FlyLo and HudMo production values with dollops of the dancehall synths and the hype energy of crunk and bounce music. Their first single, "Noglitch" (Black Acre), features a **Clouds** remix. They've got the *Donk* EP coming up next, which includes collabs with **Rhetic** and **El Eye** from the **Aspects**, plus killer remixes of **DZ**, **Egyptrixx**, and **Vadz**, as well as **Debasser's** "Fat Girls" (WIDE). And if that wasn't enough, check out their over-the-top **Matchstick Men** alias, their Edinburgh-centric Tapedekrok label,

and their *Green Beat* mixtape (on actual green cassette!). Cheeky bastards!

Terry Lynn is another voice that deserves a Basic Needs mention. Her *Kingston Logic 2.0* album mixes up producer **Phred's** dancehall, rock, electro, dubstep, and grime musical creations with Lynn's fierce flows. Together, they paint a very graphic picture of the harsher side of Kingston life with uncompromising ardor. It's a unique sound that's all fire and inspired, angular moments. The *Kingston Logic* EP flips the title track into shuffle-house dance mode courtesy of **Olivier Giacomotto** and others, and I wouldn't be surprised to hear *big* things from her in 2009. More at kingstonlogic.com.

A weird but totally awesome EP ended up in my inbox courtesy of **Stuff Records**. It's newcomer **Slugabed**, who has twisted ODB and Rick James into almost indescribably weird club bangers, like screwed and chopped Rustie with the "squelch" dial turned up to 11. If you thought it wasn't possible for "Superfreak" to sound any weirder, check myspace.com/slugabedmusic.

Final shout goes to three mad L.A. beat-heads I recently had the pleasure of seeing at **Citizen 10's** and **Mophonos** night in San Francisco. **Samiyam**, known for his **FlyamSam** collabs with Flying Lotus, dropped wonky cuts from his not-to-be-missed *Return* EP on Hyperdub and his self-released LP, *Rap Beats Vol 1*. Then both **Dibiase** and **Mono/Poly** blew my mind with stream-of-consciousness 8-bit beats jacked out with off-kilter keys and rap snippets. Keep your eyes peeled for Dibiase's *Up the Joystick* demo, plus a track on Tokyo's Jazzy Sport label, as well as Mono/Poly's singles on Circulation and Faces Records and a full-length coming on Tasteful Licks in '09. Next-level business!

Is slow the new fast? I don't know if I'd go that far, but 2008 surely saw things getting drippy, druggy, and downright bizarre in the loosely termed "new disco" scene. Psych, prog, Balearic, dub, Afrobeat, Krautrock, even industrial, and, ahem, New Age—it's all game, and why shouldn't it be?

Belgium's Eskimo Recordings certainly isn't afraid to take it down a notch. They've described artist **Low Motion Disco's** sound as "perfect horizontal dancing," and with their latest single, "The Low Murderer Is Out at Night," I'd have to agree. Its lethargic chug-chug and hazy, blissed-out guitars sound like '90s downtempo with sunstroke. That is until remixers **Mark E** and **An-2** take a crack at it. The latter, Russia's **Andrei Zakharov**, brings it from the beach to the disco with a full-on cosmic funk *tour de force*. For more of the same, don't miss the first volume of the label's latest compilations series, *Cosmic Balearic Beats*. The name says it all, and lucky for us, the mix will be split into four sampler 12"s with tracks from the likes of **Coyote**, **In Flagranti**, **Bottin**, and **Massimiliano Pagliara**.

Speaking of Mr. Pagliara, keep an eye out for his vinyl debut on **Daniel Wang's** venerable Baihu label. The "Transmissions Florale" 12" is all swelling analog synths and syncopated bass, breathy, tempered rhythms and flashy arpeggios. It's also got just the funk you'd expect from an Italian dancer-turned-producer living in Berlin. In a similar vein, be sure to track down the latest 12" from Disques Sinthomme featuring terrific tracks from **The Beat Broker** and **Lars Behrenroth** and remixes from **Citizen Kane** and **Smith & Mudd**.

London's Electric Minds label has been virtually unbeatable lately. First there was

the anthemic "Psychedelic Symmetry" from **Free Disco** and now the *Burning of the Midnight Minds* EP from Croatia's **Ilija Rudman**—a flawless double-dose of dense boogie. The b-side is the real corker as Rudman tackles **Chaz Jankel's** "You're Too Funky" and makes it sweat. Too funky? I'd like to hear **Cellophane** answer that question. Their 1984 cut, "Music Colors (Part 3)," has been re-released as the latest *Cosmic Club 12*," in all its twitchy, robo-disco glory. Try to keep your breath—we're not in Low Motion Disco land anymore.

And neither are some of the latest releases from the newly struck Rong/DFA partnership. The third and final installment in **Free Blood's** 12" single series might just be the best yet. On the top side, **Tim "Love" Lee** takes the Brooklyn duo's deconstructed dance-punk on "Parangatang" and streamlines the groove into a proper cowbell-laden burner. On the flip, newcomers **Scotty Coats and Wes (the Mes)** give "Weekend Condition" a crafty remix in the punk-funk tradition. Look out for **Scotty and Wes's** debut 12", *Double Fisted* (Rong/DFA), accompanied by two remixes from our Nordic hero **Prins Thomas**.

Lastly, no matter how hard I try, it's practically impossible not to include a release here from either Paris' **Pilooski** or Brooklyn's **Runaway**. With their latest records, both have pushed the idea of the edit to new heights. On *Dirty Edits #12*, Pilooski does wonders with cuts from **Elvis Presley** and **Holger Hiller** while Runaway, on their return to the Wurst Edits series, have created a jaw-dropping concoction of acid and deep, vocal house on "Use Me." Take it to the streets!

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Lucky 13

By Toph One

TophOne spins weekly at the RedWine Social, White Label, Saints & Sinners, and Funkside in San Francisco.



MAGIC HEART GENIES



CHANDELIERS

And what a year we've had. Births, deaths, lost weekends—we've run the gamut. Dirty electro seemed to rule my airwaves, with DC Recordings seemingly always on the turntables, but Stones Throw was there with some big ones, and Tru Thoughts could do no wrong at all. The outernational funk community just gets larger, and the big familia grows week by week. It's a funny way to make a life, but who am I to complain?

1. V/A BLACK GOLD EP

Tru Thoughts/UK/12EP

Without a doubt label of the year, kids. Big fuckin' beats and jazzy-ass breaks for days. Just check Hint's remix of the Hot 8 Brass Band on this vinyl-only (THANK YOU!) release for heavyweight proof. Mad love for all this crew.

2. MAGIC HEART GENIES HEARTIFACT

M9 Ent./US/CD

I personally have no time for weed in my life, but God bless the results when L.A. champs FatJack and Myka 9 (Freestyle Fellowship) head up to Humboldt County for studio sessions with J the Sarge. Double-time super-rapping meets soulful production for an understated masterpiece.

3. TOMMY GUERRERO "SO... HOW'S YOUR WAR DOING?"

Arkitip/US/7

If you can't find this über-rare uptempo gem from Tommy G., you *must* pick up his *Return of the Bastard* LP on Thomas Campbell's lovely Galaxia label. This is the soundtrack to my winter days.

4. THE RITZ THE NIGHT OF DAY

Lab-Oratory/US/CD

Oh, Lord, God, almighty, I need to drink with these cats. Genius rap-noir from Apoc and Rel.

5. DAM-FUNK "GALACTIC FUN"

Stonethrow/US/12

My man from L.A. lays the boogie DOWN on his debut. Catch him live, too, 'cause this guy lives the funk.

6. SUTRO "TEMPTRESS REMIXED"

Decoy/US/download

Ms. T's "Suck-it-to-ya" mix is hot as hell, but Snax kills it with his bass-wobbly Basement Remix. Tyler's vocals shine over a beat that would make Prince proud.

7. ZUCA 103 AFTER THE CARNIVAL

Six Degrees/US/CD

Start with "The Same Way," move on to "Fulero," and end with the breezy "Espero." Lovely stuff, indeed!

8. V/A "FLUID OUNCE PRESENTS..."

Unfold/UK/12

You cannot imagine how good "Carpet Vole" by Magnus & Scogil is. Truly. Thirteen fucking minutes of Good. House. Music. Yeehaw!

9. DUNKELBUNT CINNAMON GIRL EP

Chat Chapeau/SWI/12EP

I've truly had enough of these lame-ass Burning Man kooks co-opting my Balkan heritage because they're on some trustafarian hobo trip. Fuck all that. This dude is the real deal, and he rules.

10. GOODWORD THE THANKS MARTIN MIXTAPE

OneLeague/US/CD

The funny and ironic thing about this diss tape is that Martin's beats are, for the most part, dope as hell. Gurp City MCs flow all over the kid, with Conceit, Z-Man, Eddie-K, and Top'R in full effect. Find it.

11. SABO & ZEB GLOBAL WARMBEATS

Irma/ITA/CD

In a rare case of the title fitting almost exactly what is inside, New York outernational stalwarts Zeb and DJ Sabo bring the worldwide funk to the table in a big way. If past releases prove prophetic, this will be on the decks for years to come. These cats know how to lay it down.

12. CHANDELIERS THE THRUSH

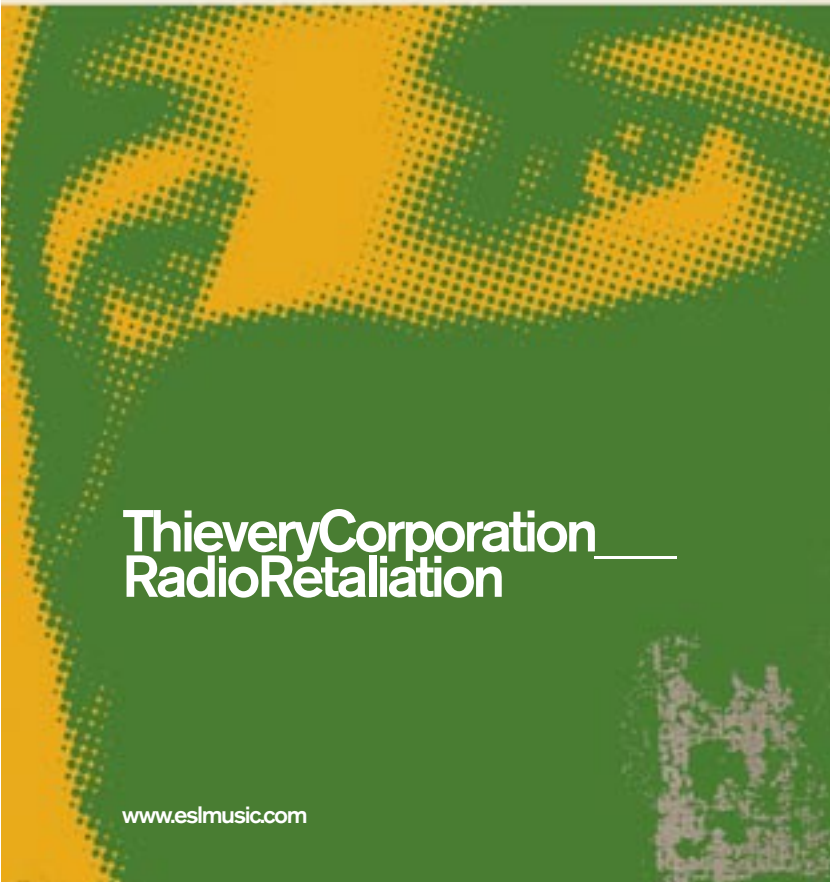
Obey Your Brain/US/CD

I'll always have a soft spot in my heart for art-damaged weirdo rock. These Chicago kids do it up right, with memorable, New Wave/No Wave-influenced jams that could either rock the spot or numb your brain at the proper bar. (Noc-Noc?)

LUCKY 13) CRAZY GIRL SOUTHERN BELLE FROM HELL

Tummy Touch/UK/CD-DVD

John Waters once described the work of Richard Kern as—and I paraphrase—"something I put on late at night to make people happy." That is exactly how I play my girl Tiffy. This is punky, draggy, tranny-infused electro-pop with a grits-and-gravy attitude. And it rules. And she's got about 7000 videos, too, for the not-so-squeamish. Imagine the Cockettes and Hunter S. Thompson at the Folsom Street Fair with a vat of wine. Yeah, it's damn good.



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IN THE STUDIO: HOT CHIP

THE 2008 FAVORITES TALK SYNTHESIZERS, LONG TAKES, AND KEEPING IN (AND OUT OF) TIME.

Since 2000, London electro-pop quintet Hot Chip has taken a push-pull approach to music, deftly switching between their frenzied live attack (with more instruments onstage than you can count) and the steady bpm of drum machines and electronics-driven sounds. Sure to be on many a year-end top-10 list is Hot Chip's 2008 LP, *Made in the Dark*, which saw the band branch out into slower, more ballad-y songwriting to serve as a counterpoint to its four-to-the-floor dance rock. We caught up with members Joe Goddard and Al Doyle during their quick stop at Current TV's Los Angeles offices earlier this year, and spoke with them about their rather 21st-century production techniques.

XLR8R: WHO DOES HOT CHIP'S PRODUCTION?

Joe Goddard: We really don't have a specific producer. Anyone is free at any moment to say, "This song needs a new synth part," or, "We should rearrange this track." A lot of the tracks were based on my laptop, so I'd do a lot of work editing and moving things around, but everyone plays, everyone makes decisions. Most of the album was made in the same way we made *The Warning* and *Coming on Strong*. A lot of stuff was started in my bedroom, and significant things were done in Al's and Felix's and Alexis' recording rooms in their home studios. Most songs are started in Cubase by making rhythms with drum samples, and then on top recording live synthesizers and guitars, percussion, other drum machines and keyboard layers, and vocals—just literally sitting in front of my computer in my room.

Al Doyle: There were quite a lot more sort of "long takes" in the process; where previously I think we were cutting things up a little bit shorter, you could maybe sometimes hear the loop a little bit. This time we tried to do mostly long takes that went across the whole of the song, so even those songs that weren't recorded in a "live" way still have more of that feel.

THAT TENSION HAS REALLY DEFINED YOUR MUSIC.

JG: It's kind of been a constant evolution of our sound, getting to a point where [our songs] don't sound like computer productions so much. I think the way that we hear music now, you lose a certain vitality when things are very heavily layered and edited, so we tried to get away

from that. And in terms of rhythm, there was an attempt to have a more kind of tribal and vital live sound to things, like in "Shake Your Fist" or "Bendable Possible." But then, something like "Ready for the Floor" is very heavily produced and edited—and there it's all about drawing in melodies on-screen. So it's a real mixture in terms of production elements on the album.

HOW DID THE LIVE ROCK ELEMENTS MESH WITH THE URGE TO MAKE DANCE MUSIC?

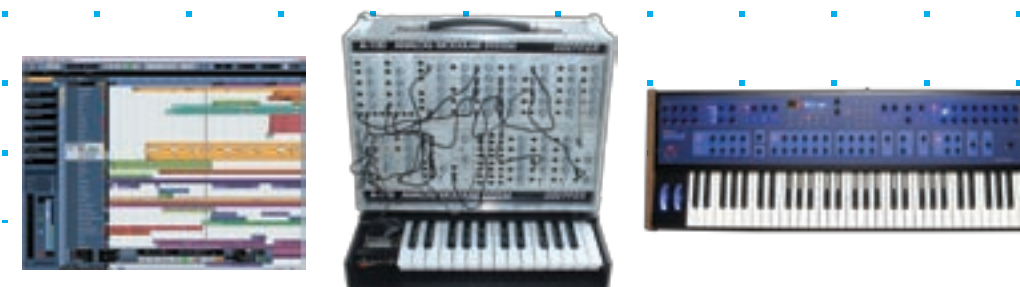
JG: All the drums begin with drum machines or with drum parts created in Cubase, so they're rigidly in time. Over the top of that we can layer synths that are sequenced or created on the computer, or we can layer live stuff. That's where you get the most exciting moments—you have something that's rigidly in time and then other things that kind of waver. It's the Sly Stone/Prince kind of thing—having a drum machine and then, depending on your live playing, you can create interesting swings or grooves... that mixture is something we love. The live show is all about that—sometimes working totally with the rhythm, sometimes pulling against it; trying to create this kind of balance. We've had a whole bunch of new stuff that we started to use on this album—a Doepfer modular synth and a [Dave Smith] Poly Evolver, for instance—but a lot of it is created on stuff we've owned for years. On the prior albums, we used a lot of old Casio and Yamaha keyboards and things; sometimes you find that the sounds in those keyboards are actually more unusual than these presets you get on modern keyboards, which you feel like you've heard on every dance track that's around.

SO YOUR SYNTHS ARE MOSTLY HARDWARE?

JG: Well, I do use some soft synths. I particularly love this [Arturia] Moog Modular VST instrument; it's on almost every track on the album. On some of the tracks it's used to create a lot of the parts, from the bass drums and snares to the big synth parts and bass parts. And with that, what I love is taking presets and really messing around with them. There are certain remixes I've done where I've just basically used that synth to create the whole thing.

Made in the Dark is out now on Astralwerks. hotchip.co.uk

Hear audio clips from this interview at XLR8R.com/123extras



IN HOT CHIP'S STUDIO, CUBASE, DOEPFER ANALOG MODULAR SYNTH, AND DAVE SMITH POLY EVOLVER SYNTH

FROM LEFT: AL DOYLE, ALEXIS TAYLOR, OWEN CLARKE, FELIX MARTIN, JOE GODDARD

SCRATCH MASSIVE

STANTON DASCATCH SCS.3D MIDI CONTROLLER

Riding the wave of touch-based devices—a wave spearheaded by Apple’s iPhone/iPod Touch and Nintendo’s DS—Stanton has designed a MIDI controller that attempts to manage your music manipulation needs. The unfortunately named DaScratch (also known as the SCS.3D) is blessed with five touch sliders, one rotary touch controller, and a whole gang of buttons for your fingers to dance on. It’s meant for use with the likes of Traktor, Ableton Live, and Serato (templates are included for each), and effectively brings gesture-based live music one \$300 step closer to the hands of those without the \$3000 to spend on a Jazz Mutant Lemur.

So, what exactly can you do with this touchable device? Scratching, scrubbing, navigation, cueing, looping, sampling, pitch-shifting, effects, and more are built into the software via presets. We used the device primarily with Serato; the installation was pretty

straightforward, and within 15 minutes we were using the SCS.3D to do all of the above. The ability to easily set cue points and loop points was a nice change of pace from using our laptop’s delicate keyboard, and going to town on the rotary controller to freak the loop lengths in real time allowed for some stuttering, beat-juggly bliss.

The unit is light and immensely portable; thanks to the scarcity of moving parts, it feels like it can take some abuse. And while the ability to link two units together (say, to reserve one for control of each turntable) with magnets is a nice touch, the software is a bit disappointing; you can’t edit the software presets directly, and instead you’re forced to make your own in MIDI Translator. Still, if you’re looking for a device to give you better hands-on control of your DJ- or live performance sets, you could touch a lot worse. *Evan Shamoon*

MSRP: \$299; enterthesystem.com



PRO TOOLS FOR VIDEO, FILM, AND MULTIMEDIA—SECOND EDITION TUTORIAL GUIDE

As the media world mutates and expands, and the technology to develop film and new-media projects is becoming more readily available to the public, more and more electronic musicians are finding work in these realms. While far from exhaustive, this volume is a great introduction to the program that has become the standard for video, film, multimedia, and sound design—Pro Tools. Whether you’re an engineer, composer, or producer, you’ll find something of use in here—from shortcuts to the latest technologies, FX tips, mixing standards, and EQing advice, **pretty much everything you need to know is touched upon** and intelligently organized for quick reference. A definite must for any serious sound geek’s library. *Alexander Posell*

MSRP: \$29.99; cengage.com



LOGITECH SQUEEZEBOX BOOM WIRELESS DIGITAL AUDIO RECEIVER

Logitech’s Squeezebox system was already a godsend when it entered my home years back and removed the mass of iPod and computer stereo hook-ups clogging my life. Its well-designed software interface took care of all the file messiness and subscription-service passwords (Rhapsody, Slacker, et al.), while the hardware looked good on the shelf. Fast-forward to now, and it’s all in one simple, sleek, box-style player—with plenty of boom from its 30-watt amp and speakers. With a quick account set-up on Squeezebox’s free network, I had the Boom up and running in a matter of minutes, wirelessly streaming crisp internet radio feeds and pretty much any non-DRM audio files from my laptop. With line-in capabilities, **the Boom is a super set-up to be sure**, but it could still use an upgrade when it comes to EQing controls. *Ken Taylor*

MSRP: \$269.99; logitech.com

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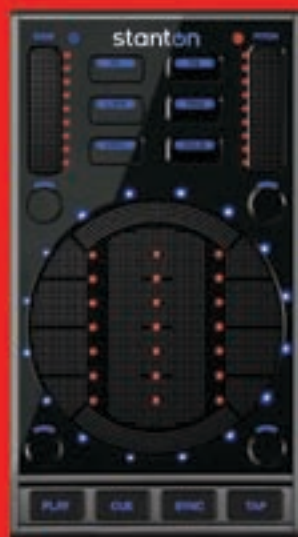
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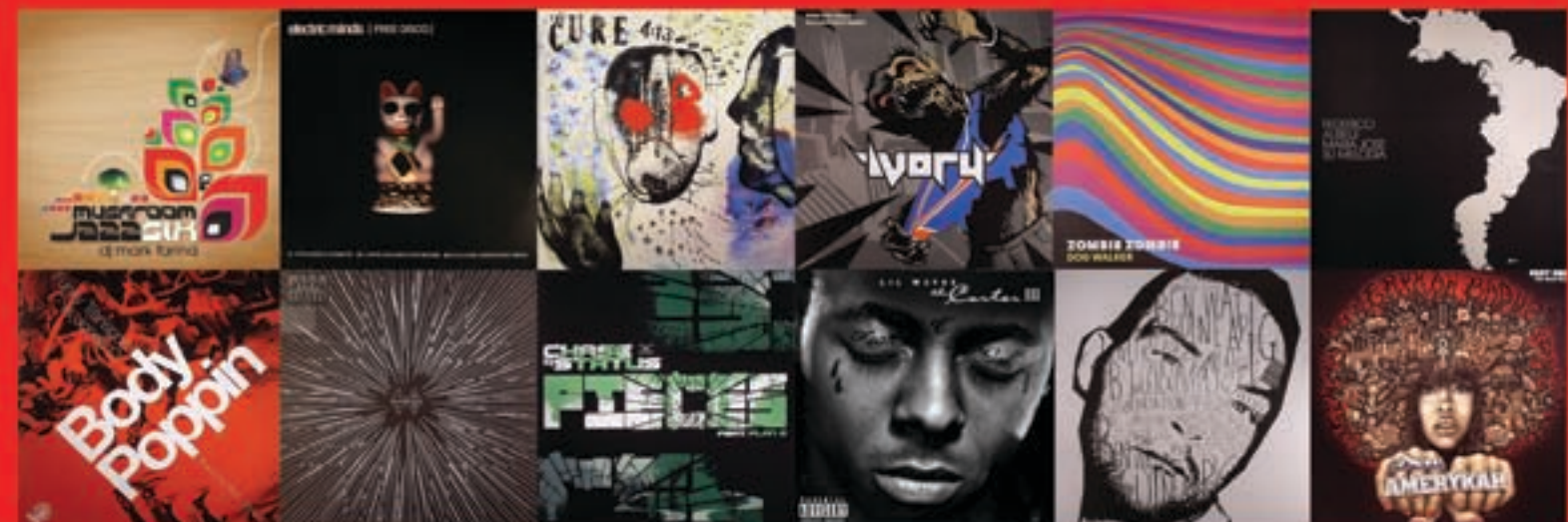
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Holiday Game Guide: More Games Worth Your Skrilla!

Whether you're shopping for a dragon slayer or a hockey player, *XLR8R's* holiday game guide won't steer you wrong! Now, pay attention and stuff a stocking or two! *Words* Ryan Rayhill



For the Speed Demon

Let's face it, Sammy Hagar is nothing if not wise. Driving 55 is, in fact, for sissy-pants Marys. Get your lead foot on with these titles.

Pure (Disney; Xbox 360, PS3)
Pulling stunts on relatively fast present-day ATVs in scenic vistas? Yes, please!

WipeOut HD (Sony; PS3)
Hyper-fast future cars in HD? Yes, please!

Midnight Club: Los Angeles (Rockstar; Xbox 360, PS3)
Like to drive illegally fast in Los Angeles? Like to spend unreasonable amounts of money on badass rides? Well, what are you waiting for?



For the Soldier of Fortune

If you have an itchy trigger finger and a strong distaste for aliens, both terrestrial and extra-terrestrial, then these are for you!

Gears of War 2 (Microsoft; Xbox 360)
The biggest 360 shooter of the year, *GoW2* ramps up the action of the original with giant enemies, more multiplayer options, and, best of all, chainsaw duels!

Resistance 2 (Sony; PS3)
The PS3's definitive shooter takes you back to the 1950s—a kinder, gentler time... where alien hordes have overrun much of the planet. Up to 60 players can blast each other online!

Call of Duty: World at War (Activision; Xbox 360, PS3, Wii, DS)
The follow-up to 2007's Game of the Year goes back to WWII...with sexy results!

SOCOM: Confrontation (Sony; PS3)
The latest edition of the mega-popular tactical online shooter allows you to take up to 32 buddies from the likes of the U.S. Navy SEALs to Spain's Special Operations Unit to the shores of North Africa for some communal firefights.

For the Sportsman

Okay, we didn't include any football here because, well, we already mentioned two football games this issue and frankly there are only a couple of good ones. Get over it and try these!

NBA 2K9 (2K; Xbox 360, PS3)
The highest rated b-ball game seven years running also aims to be the most accurate this year, as player stats and abilities are constantly updated online, with gamers able to give their own feedback as well.

Shaun White Snowboarding (Ubisoft; Xbox 360, Wii, PS3, PS2)
The Carrot Top of the slopes finally gets his own game! While it's awesome on all systems, the Wii version takes advantage of the Balance Board, allowing the closest thing you can get to actual snowboarding without freezing cold or an eventual neck brace.

WWE Smackdown vs. Raw 2009 (THQ; Xbox 360, Wii, PS3, PS2)
While technically sports *entertainment*, I defy *you* to lift another man over your head or fall off a 15-foot ladder three times a week! Anyway, Inferno Matches and Create-a-Finisher mode make this the best wrassler yet!



For the Caped Adventurer

True or false: You or someone you know really well pretends every meter stick in the house is a longsword and every couch cushion a demonic creature. If you answered true, then read on!

World of Warcraft: Wrath of the Lich King (Blizzard; PC, Mac)
As much of an amazingly rich experience as it is a time-toilet, *Lich King* takes everything awesome in *WoW* and rewards those who put in the work with awesome new quests and abilities. You can be something called a "Death Knight." Need we say more?

Fable II (Microsoft; Xbox 360)
Live a lifetime of good and/or evil in this epic action RPG where your decisions truly affect the world around you.

Castlevania: Order of Ecclesia (Konami; DS)
Dracula, you say? Again? Hell, yes! For fans of old-school *Castlevania* à la *Symphony of the Night*, this one treats you right.



Super-Terrific-Happy Hour

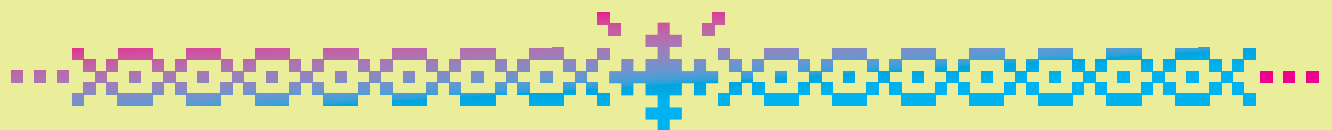
For those who like a quick fix of awesome, these games will make for good times.

Monster Lab (Eidos; Wii, DS)
Playing a Frankenstein-esque mad scientist, you mini-game your way to creating all manner of comically horrific creatures—who can then do battle Wolfman vs. Dracula-style.

Rock Band 2 (EA; Xbox 360, Wii, PS3, PS2)
Guitar Hero: World Tour (Activision; Xbox 360, Wii, PS3, PS2)
Okay, unless you have been living under a rock, you know what these games are all about. Start a band and rock out to the hits!

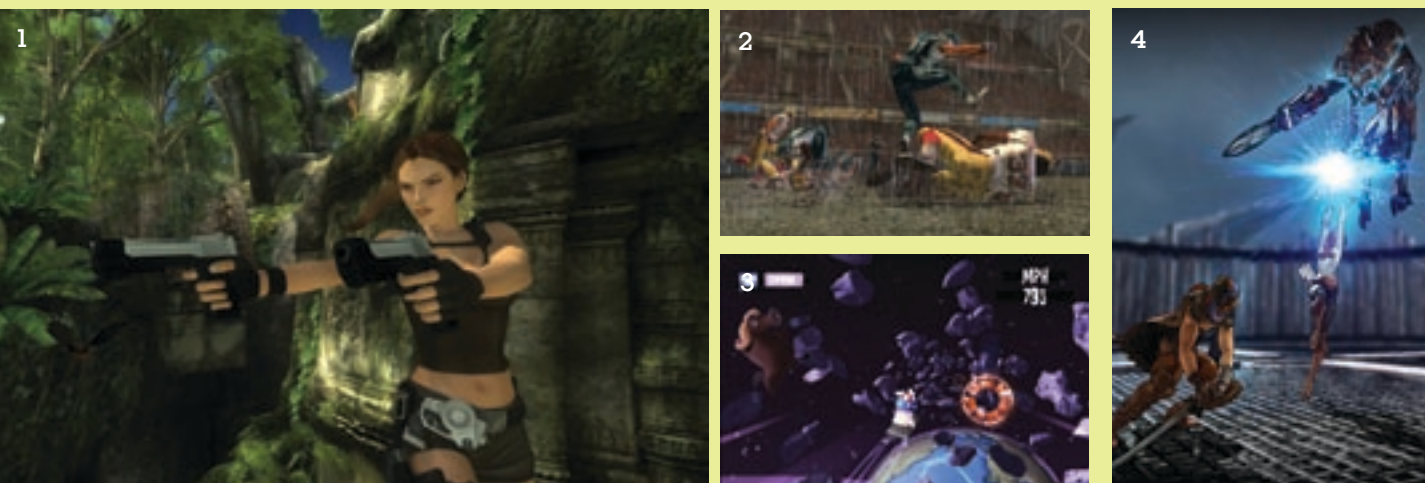
Guinness World Records: The Video Game (Warner Bros.; Wii, DS)
From popping balloons the quickest to growing the longest, filthiest fingernails on Earth, you too can break (actual) world records!

words Ryan Rayhill



loading...

XLR8R picks the hottest videogames and gear of the month.



Happy Holler-Daze, ho, ho, hoes! 'Tis the season and gaming is the reason! Or maybe it's because of some other guy... either way, fictitious characters rule this month!

Let's jump in head-first, literally, with *Mirror's Edge* (EA; Xbox 360, PS3), a first-person action game that focuses on parkour-like tumbling, running, and jumping over the rooftops of a dystopian metropolis while you try to save the (super-hot!) main character's sister (who has been kidnapped by a Big Brother government). You know those dreams where you're falling off a building and the thrill of your belly being pulled out of your back wakes you up? *Mirror's Edge* is like that, except instead of waking up, you land on your feet and pull some judo on a fool before capping him. Fuckin' sweet.

Giving *Mirror's Edge* a run for its running-jumping dollar this season is veteran adventures Lara Croft in *Tomb Raider: Underworld* (Eidos; Xbox 360, Wii, PS3, PS2). On the hunt for Thor's Hammer, the buxom Brit hits Thailand, the Arctic, and the Mediterranean Sea, and encounters dozens of dangerous puzzles, creatures, and thugs bent on stopping her. The environment plays a much bigger part this time around—you can interact with it and affect it (in some cases permanently) like never before, allowing Lara to do almost everything you had ever wanted her to...except for...well, you know.

If manly men in tights are more your cup of testosterone *Blitz: The League II* (Midway; Xbox

360, PS3) hits the gridiron with a more badass edge than you'll find in other annual football franchises. From the ability to create your own team to dramatic scandals to stomping on your opponents' helmets after a nasty tackle, *The League II* takes fictional teams and players (except for a guest turn from Lawrence Taylor!) and makes them almost as ridiculous as the real thing...almost.

And only slightly more ridiculous is the amount of fun to be had in *Rayman Raving Rabbids: TV Party* (Ubisoft; Wii, DS). Almost 50 mini-games await you as the titular Rabbids take over the local UHF station in an attempt to... well, we don't really know. Or care. What we do know is that *TV Party* incorporates the use of your ass—and the Wii Balance Board! By sitting on the Balance Board (okay, you can also stand on it, or use the Wiimote) you can steer a bunny down a slope, fly Silver Surfer-style across the planet, or shake to de riddim as you attempt to defeat the bastardly bunnies at their own adorably annoying game!

While the long wait for *Final Fantasy XIII* doesn't seem to be getting any shorter, RPG fans will squirt with delight as *The Last Remnant* (Square-Enix; Xbox 360) unloads its swords and sorcery on an eager audience. Designed from the start to appeal not only to the traditional Japanese fanbase but to worldwide tastes, *Remnant* sees you and your "union" of cat people, rabbit people, lizard people, and people seeking out powerful artifacts in an epic

quest to bring peace to the zoo... er, world.

With a sharp new cel-shaded graphic approach, *Prince of Persia* (Ubisoft; Xbox 360, PS3), the latest game in the popular desert-scouring series (though the name may fool you) rebirths the prince with gusto. A totally new main character, who isn't a prince at all but a swaggering boozehound (game characters—they're just like us!), suddenly witnesses an evil genesis and sets out to stop it along with a beautiful companion who is there to his save hazard-prone ass along the way. Lesson? Booze + danger = chicks!

You know as well as I do that nothing says "Happy Holidays" like a zombie apocalypse! And *Left 4 Dead* (EA; Xbox 360) will deliver the shambling, brain-starved corpses like so many socks at Hanukkah. Up to four players cooperate in this shooter to survive the invasion of the undead—or become one of them! Yes, you can actually play as a zombie in *Left 4 Dead's* multiplayer mode, letting you unleash more infection than a Lower East Side strumpet!

Last but not least, we have the return of a classic series that fans have been clamoring for for years—*Tecmo Bowl: Kickoff* (Tecmo; DS). Yes, the best football game the old NES ever mustered comes to us this month on Nintendo's über-popular portable machine! And while everyone in the original is either dead or retired, *Kickoff* promises a similarly satisfying experience via touch-screen and wii multiplayer. Everything old is new again.

1. **TOMB RAIDER: UNDERWORLD**
2. **BLITZ: THE LEAGUE II**
3. **RAYMAN RAVING RABBIDS: TV PARTY**
4. **PRINCE OF PERSIA**

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VIS-ED Mario Hugo

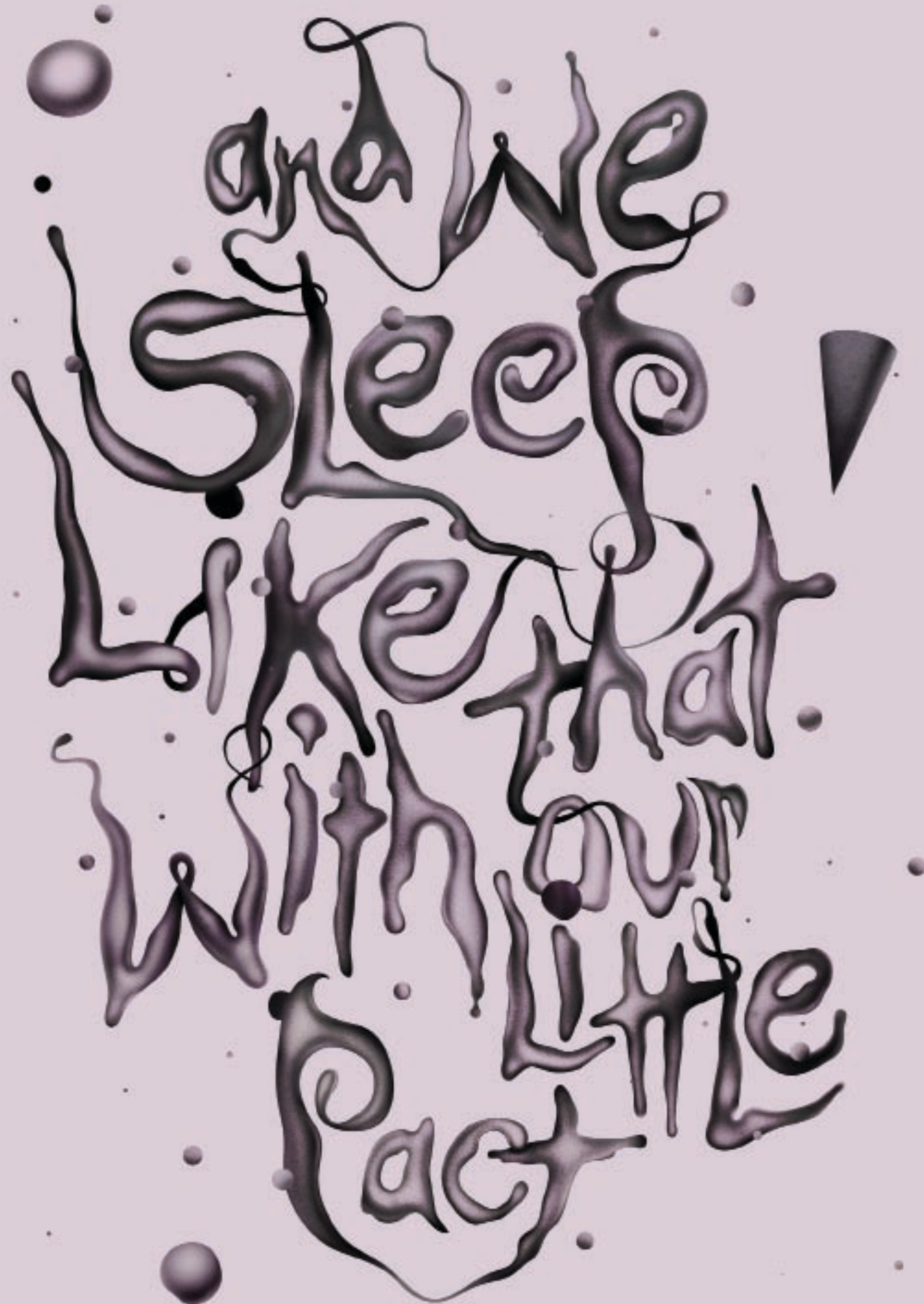
A New Yorker plays with materials and mystery, geometry and gravity.

Left:
Mario Hugo
exclusive for *XL&R*,
"Blubird," 2008

At the age of 26, Mario Hugo's style is already more sophisticated than most designers twice his age. Playing with shapes, lines, and space, he crafts ethereal, timeless art that is blissfully free of parody or obvious references. Even when it's hand-drawn or inked—which it often is—Hugo's work is no lo-fi, slapdash affair, but rather a careful, mysterious exploration of the tension between organic, human shapes and a sort of mystic geometry.

One of the most riveting aspects of Hugo's art and design is how many different media he works in. Work for Dolce & Gabbana's 10th anniversary book and *Flaunt* magazine is turned out with gouache, graphite, and China ink on sepia-toned book pages, reminding simultaneously of Da Vinci's drawings, Dali's surrealism, and a sort of late-'70s psychedelia. At Spanish gallery Vallery he explored acrylic paints and large-scale embroidery; his logos and type are fairly straightforward—but no less clever—matters of pixel-pushing and pica wrangling. Mock-ups for Beck's *Modern Guilt* album (which went unused) are an even more interesting meld between handicraft and graphic design, showing Hugo playing with inkblots, spray paint, and bold celestial themes.

A fan of author Milan Kundera and designer Peter Saville, Hugo nonetheless doesn't like to play favorites. "My tastes change quickly," he demurs, preferring instead to talk about the process of creation and the abstract ideas that shape his work.





Above: "Garden of Malaise & General Discontent," 2007

What is your favorite childhood memory? My aunt narrating an animal alphabet book—it's a super-vivid memory. A small piece I finished recently is actually a quiet homage to that memory.

What has been your favorite project to work on?

I took about six months off from commercial stuff to create drawings and embroideries for my first solo show. I don't even really remember the opening, but the process itself was the reward: the lack of sleep, coffee addiction, maniacal consumption. It was nice to get lost for a bit, and I'd like to do it again next year.

You seem to work in so many different media. Are you in a certain mood when you want to work with ink versus embroidery, for instance? I like thinking about my work tangentially. I like to introduce a sentimentality to my stuff regardless of what media I'm exploring. It's not as random as it seems. I like to extrapolate a theme... Let's say my last piece was all about shape. Shapes are composed of line, so let's make a piece all about line. How can we make line more interesting? Let's embroider it; let's have people run their fingers through what is essentially a three-dimensional drawing. I think it'll all continue this way. There is a romance to carrying ideas from media to media for me, and I really like this humanist

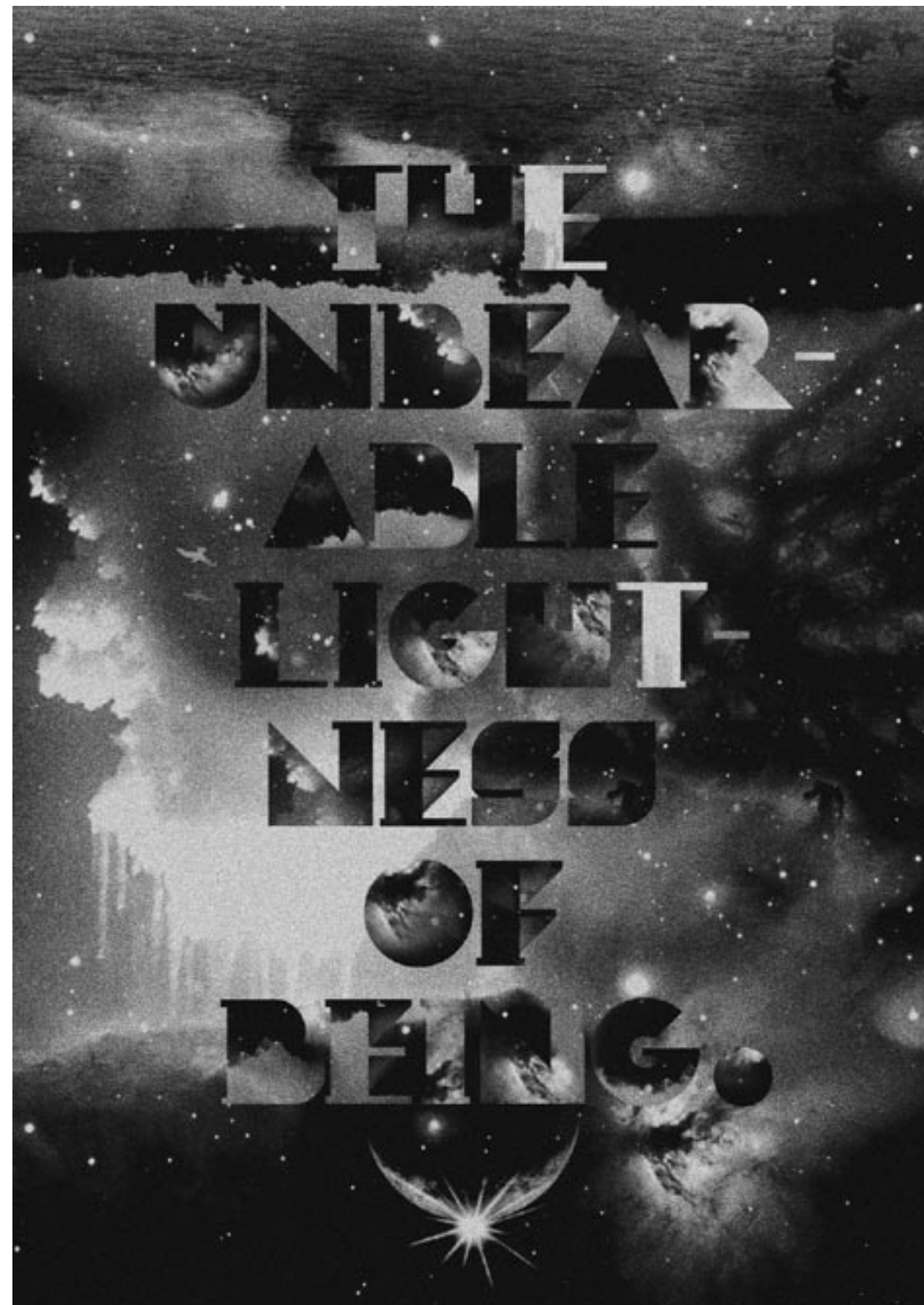
place where people get lost in a variety of textures and details.

What is hardest medium to work in?

I've never taken to painting and I find cameras tricky.

What concept did you have in mind when working on graphics for Beck's most recent album? Was this developed upon listening to the music?

They sent some [aspirational] references and the title *Modern Guilt*. To tell this story allegorically, it was as if I'd been asked to score a soundtrack at least as good as *Jaws*, *Indiana Jones*, or *Star Wars*. Beck didn't want to influence me with the music, so I had no context and the only direction was a title. I



Right: "Unbearable Lightness of Being," 2007



From left:
Reverie & Troublemaking cover, 2008;
Oedipus 7" sleeve, 2007.



Clockwise from top left:
 Beck *Modern Guilt* submission, 2008;
 "Nowhere Again" embroidery, 2007;
 "Accept and Proceed," 2008;
 Hanne Hukkelberg CD packaging, 2008.

thought I'd create stuff that vaguely spoke of airbrushed vinyl and '70s pseudo-science. They loved the comps, kept me at it for a month or two, but it didn't fit his concept and the designs just didn't stick.

What is your favorite part of your daily routine?

My cat wakes me for food. I oblige her resentfully.

How did your collaboration come about with Barcelona-based store Vallery?

Vallery was a great experience. [Design collective] Vasava just wrote me and asked me if I'd like to exhibit [in their gallery]—my work was quite small and delicate at that

point, but I agreed, and spent the next six months forcing my work to grow in size. I think they are the only online store that sells my work, but I'm kind of ambivalent about selling prints in general.

How many siblings do you have? Tell me about collaborating with them.

I'm the oldest of four: Gabriella is 19, Gaston is 15, and Alejandro is nine. We're all quite creative, but I collaborate most with Alejandro. He's the subject of a variety of drawings, and we sometimes share sheets of paper, returning the page to one another once we've added some of our own experimental elements. It's just fun to put together pieces, and I hope to one day bind

our experimentation into a book, tentatively titled *Reverie & Trouble-Making*.

What music do you listen to while you work?

I like all kinds of stuff, really. This last week I've been listening to Nilsson, Benoît Pioulard, Khonnor, Emmy the Great, Sleeping States, Tunng—the soft stuff that sounds like I'd like my work to look. I've been more into books on tape and radio podcasts than music for the last couple years.

Have you always had such an affinity for shapes?

I love the universality of simple things: shapes, contrasts, geometry. It's a language

everyone understands. I prefer to suggest narrative [rather] than tell stories, and shapes are just an excellent means of suggestion. I love old stuff, too: Bruno Munari, Kasimir Malevich, the Albers. I really respond to the early/mid-century stuff.

It seems like a lot of your recent work has sort of outer-space themes...

It's not space so much as balance and tension. I've always been drawn to these very natural compositions—shapes that weight one another, gravity and tension. Sometimes space fulfills that narrative (and I'm a fan of space, as evidenced by sweaters and scarves) so I use it, but I'd say it's just

one vernacular tied to a love of making objects float.

What scares you most?

Coming off talks of space, I have a totally irrational fear of UFOs. This one movie called *Fire in the Sky* really messed me up as a kid.

Who is your favorite artist of 2008?

I've seen a lot of Deanne Cheuk's new stuff recently and she's a perennial favorite. Benbo George makes some fantastic stuff. Masako Ando is great. But this list changes and grows daily.

What visual artist or musician would you

have most wanted to trade places with when you were 16?

Wow. This is a great question. Jarvis Cocker is my gut response. I'll regret this answer tomorrow. *His 'n' Hers* era, for the curious.

Dune, 2001, or Clash of the Titans?

2001, no competition. 2001 is in my top 10 anythings of all time.

What is the best advice you've ever received?

Make yourself uncomfortable; fall into holes you have to claw your way out of.

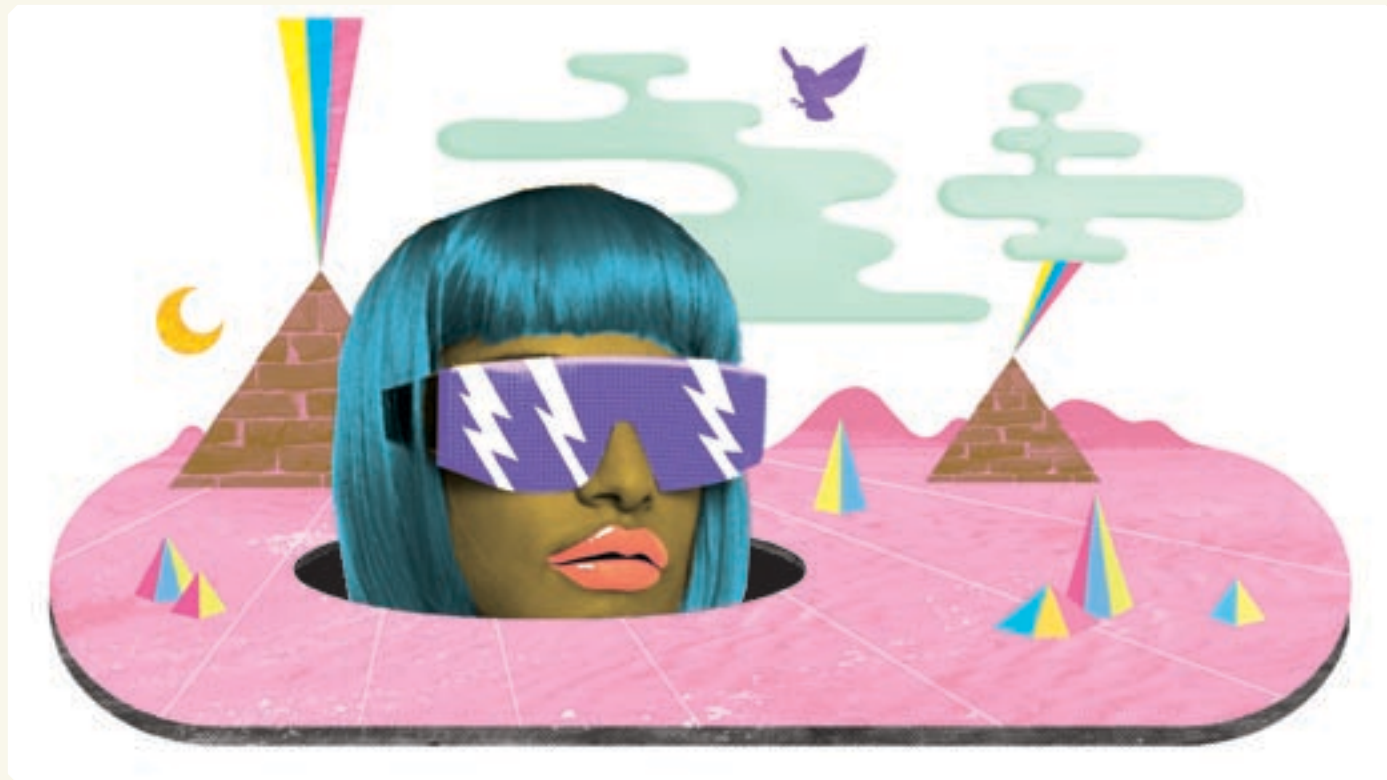
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Missing in Action

Words Brandon Ivers
Illustration Colin Strandberg

Reluctant pop star M.I.A. reflects on her desire to ditch the limelight.



Perhaps the only shocking moment of this year's **Bonnaroo music festival** came when singer **M.I.A.** announced her early retirement from the music business. You might think the usual thieves, pimps, and shallow money trenches were to blame, but it turns out the routine grind of celebrity (or her budding bun in the oven) was the real culprit. We caught up with M.I.A. at Coachella before the total dissatisfaction set in earlier this year.

XLR8R: If you could have Fatboy Slim's laser show, would you?

M.I.A.: It's just a dude on some decks! I could paint a picture and post it up [laughs]. He's had years and years to develop all those lasers and shit. I've only had three, and my time is ticking because I want out.

So... no?

I don't want to be "the thing" anymore. I don't want to be my art. When you're a female, it's harder to not be seen like that. You become the face of it, and then you become the art, not your art. And I think there's nothing

more revolutionary than to go, "Look, I could have been Gwen Stefani, but I ain't... fuck you."

What would you rather do instead?

I think if I put my energy into someone else's good, it won't just be about me. I'm starting a label [N.E.E.T.]; I can still produce songs. African Boy is here, and Rye Rye is here—I'd love to do shit through them. I just don't want to be the focus.

Is it a matter of just being sick of making music altogether?

Well, I make music because I've always been making shit. When I was making pictures, I felt like there was something lacking in them; there needed to be sound. So I was trying to work something out, like, how do you make a picture with sound and film and a t-shirt and all these other things? It's a vibe, and the medium has always been secondary to that. Making pita bread can be just as creative as making a song... I wanna stay enthusiastic about life. As soon as I feel like I've been sucked into a format or a formula, I wanna leave. And

too many people know me in the music industry, and too many people have already started pinning shit on me. "And next year you can come back to Coachella and do a *bigger* show, and we'll get you a better headlining spot."

Let's talk about terrorism (kidding...).

[groans] In all seriousness, I've been doing music for three years, and I don't even know about that shit anymore! It's time for the next group of people having the mind to go, "Right, these are the things that need to be said about the world." But at the moment, everyone thinks what needs to be said is, "Do more drugs and fuck more girls." So I'm letting everyone have their time with that. I still wanna make a dance song that's like... [sings] "I go to clubs and I shake my head, shake my head, and I shake my head. At Subway I shake my head, at fucking... McDonald's I shake my head." I don't know. Right now, I'm having a shake-my-head moment.

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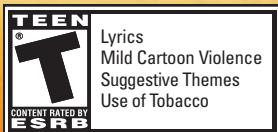
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